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**"Alice had endeavoured to compose herself, and had dried her tears, but they fell again abundantly, as she opened the case, and looked upon the likeness of her mother, encircled with a lock of her fair hair."**





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**HOME MEMORIES;**

**OR,**

**ECHOES OF A MOTHER'S VOICE.**

**BY**  
**MRS. CAREY BROCK,**  
**AUTHOR OF "CHILDREN AT HOME," "WORKING AND WAITING,"**  
**ETC. ETC.**

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# HOME MEMORIES

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## CHAPTER I.

"So when years have hurried o'er us,  
And our fathers sink to rest,  
Following those who passed before us,  
We may rise to call them blest."

HANKINSON.

It was on a pleasant September evening that two young girls were seated in the bow-window of a large sitting-room in a London hotel, looking down upon the busy street beneath.

They were evidently sisters, for they were dressed exactly alike, but in person there was no resemblance between them.

The elder of the two, whose age might be about fifteen, was a tall girl, with large dark eyes, a profusion of almost black hair, a complexion which, though singularly clear, was very pale, and a proud look about the mouth, which showed that, whatever others might think about her, Edith Cornwall had no mean opinion of herself.

The younger sister was altogether different. She was as

fair as Edith was dark, and the expression of her blue eyes and of her small rosy mouth was as soft and sweet as that of her sister's was proud and determined.

Although there was but one short year between them, difference in character had from childhood led every one to look upon Alice Cornewall as very much younger than her sister, quite a child, indeed, compared with Edith. This was evidently the opinion of an elderly servant, who, entering the room, inquired of Edith whether she would wish to have tea before her papa returned ? to which the young lady replied, in a short, decided tone, without consulting her sister on the subject, "no, they would wait."

The servant retired.

The two sisters returned to their occupation of looking out of the window, without apparently paying much attention to what was going on beneath. They both looked graver by far than girls of their age are generally seen to look. Perhaps a key to the cause of the seriousness, which marked both their young countenances, might be found in the deep mourning which they wore, their black merino dresses, trimmed with folds of crape, showing plainly that they must recently have lost some very near relation. But although they both looked grave, it was with a very different sort of seriousness. Edith seemed perplexed and anxious, and there was an expression of annoyance on her face which told as plainly as words could have said, that the circumstances in which she found herself just then were not such as she would have chosen. Alice appeared only sad and sor-

rowful, and the sweet expression showed that it must be some heavy sorrow which could cloud the brightness of that young face, and introduce a deep tone of sadness amongst the clear notes of that young voice.

The younger sister was the first to speak, after the servant, with a respectful "Yes, Miss," had retired from the room—

"How strange to think that we are really in London!" said Alice at length, "London, which we had so often longed to see, where we had so often wished to be!"

"I am sure," replied Edith, "I had far rather never have come to London at all, than have come like this."

"Yes," said Alice, "when we used to look forward so much to coming to London, it was always with the thought of mamma's being with us, entering into all our pleasures, dear, dear mamma."

And Alice's blue eyes overflowed with tears.

"I wonder what poor mamma would say if she could see us now going to school? she used so often to say she hoped we should never leave home," was Edith's next remark.

"And I am sure," replied her sister, "papa is sorry enough to part with us; you know, Edith, he never would send us away from him if it were not quite necessary."

"It may be necessary for you, Alice," replied Edith, "but I can't see that it is for me. Mrs. Graham said yesterday she wondered papa was sending me to school, for that I was quite as much educated as most girls of eighteen or nineteen, and that she thought he would have been con-



sulting his own happiness much more by allowing me to remain at home to keep house for him."

Alice could not help feeling hurt at seeing how very little her only sister seemed to consider *her* feelings and wishes, in the opinion she was expressing about her own prospects, and it was with rather more impatience than was usual to her, that she answered, "I don't think papa would like to separate us, and I am sure mamma would never have wished us to be parted; besides, Edith, I wonder you listen to what Mrs. Graham says, you know she is a very foolish, worldly woman, and mamma never liked our being with her."

"I would be a little more charitable in my way of speaking if I were you, Alice," replied Edith, shortly; "I'm sure you never heard mamma call Mrs. Graham either vain or worldly."

"No," said Alice, "I never did, and I dare say I ought not to have said so, only I have such a bad way of saying what I think, without stopping to ask whether I ought to say it or not; and do you know, Edith, I don't think papa likes our being so much with Mrs. Graham, and I believe one reason why he sends us away is, that now dear mamma is not with us to take care of us, he cannot prevent our sometimes being with people he does not quite like, if we remain with him in the regiment."

"I am sure," said Edith, "Mrs. Graham never did me any harm, and I don't well see how she ever could."

Alice could not respond to this very decidedly expressed

opinion. She remembered how only the day before Mrs. Graham had called at the hotel to wish them good-bye, Edith had been out with her papa, but she had had a long chat with Alice, during the course of which she had spoken so plainly of her beauty, and made such foolish remarks about her blue eyes and her bright complexion, that after she had left, poor Alice had had a hard struggle with herself, before she could banish from her mind the feelings of vanity which Mrs. Graham's idle remarks had excited, and remember how often her mother had warned her to turn a deaf ear to flattering words, and keep her heart with all diligence. Neither did Alice think it had been quite wise or right in Mrs. Graham to prejudice Edith's mind against the idea of going to school when their father had come to the decision of sending her there. No, Alice was quite of her mamma's opinion that it was not at all a good thing for them to be much with Mrs. Graham.

But she did not again express this opinion. It was more charitable perhaps not to do so, and, besides, it was never any use to argue with Edith; Edith always thought she knew best, she was never to be convinced by her sister; indeed, Alice often thought it was not very likely she should be, when she was older and far more clever. So the subject of Mrs. Graham was dropped between the sisters.

Not so, however, that of the school.

It was naturally the thought uppermost in both their minds, for they had never in their lives spent a day at school, and they looked upon the life which they were to

begin to-morrow at Mrs. Clifton's in St. John's Wood, as the entrance into a new world.

They were still discussing the possibility of their being happy there, and had altogether turned away from the window, where it was now too dark even to discern the figures of the people passing in the street, when Alice said, "Don't you think, Edith, we had better order lights, and have tea prepared? It will be more comfortable for papa to find it ready."

"Yes," said Edith; "ring the bell, please, Alice."

The bell was rung, and the waiter desired to bring candles and tea.

It was Edith who gave all the orders, but when they had been executed, it was Alice who was the most active in arranging everything comfortably,—as comfortably as things could be made to look in that large dreary room, where the heavy pieces of furniture were placed in stiff regular order, at most unsociable distances from each other, and there was no look of snugness about anything, so different, Alice said, "from the room at home, where every chair and table had its own story."

Edith remarked, in reply, that "the chairs and tables at home would soon be telling their stories to unheeding ears;" and Alice replied with a sigh, "Yes, that is the worst part of an army life, one remains just long enough in a place to get attached to it, and learn to look upon it as one's home, and then one must leave it, and go away to some strange place, without one pleasant association about it. I must

say, I feel very like one of those plants Joseph was so busy about the other day, and which he said were so fond of the soil they were growing in, that he had a world of trouble to get them to leave it."

"Yes," said Edith, "so do I. I am afraid I have not been very carefully uprooted either, for I feel just as if some part of me had been left behind. But Wolverton can never be to us like any other place, and no other place can ever be like Wolverton."

"No," said Alice, "for it was there we last had our own darling mamma with us, and surely some part of our hearts must be, as you say, left buried with her there. I can't think how people get over sorrow as they seem to do; I don't much think they can ever really forget a great grief, or be afterwards as they were before, but I suppose they learn to hide it better as time goes on. You know, Edith, how sad the Symonds were when the news came of their father's death, and how they cried, and yet now they seem just as merry and gay as ever."

"Some people soon forget trouble," said Edith.

"But I don't think we shall," said Alice; "and then, you know, Edith, our dear mamma was not like anybody else, she was so, so good,—oh, Edith, shall we ever be like her?"

But Edith did not answer, and when Alice looked at her, she saw that she had turned again to the window, and was standing there, with her face towards the dark street,

crying, Alice knew, by the bent down head, and averted face.

She went softly up to her, and putting her arm round her neck, said gently, "Don't cry, Edith dear, please don't. It was foolish of me to begin talking about dear mamma; papa will be here directly, and it is his last evening, and we must try and make him happy. Oh, Edith, don't let him find us crying." And Alice's tone grew quite imploring as she heard a step on the stairs, and imagined it must be her father's.

Edith heard it too, and drying her eyes, she turned away from the window, and had come forward to the table, when a tall gentleman of military appearance, and a most pleasing although very grave countenance, entered the room.

Both girls hastened to meet him, and each in turn was as tenderly caressed as though their father had been absent many days, instead of only a few hours.

"I have left you a long time alone," he said; "I have been quite concerned about it, thinking you would be so dull, but it was unavoidable, I was detained at the Horse Guards, and had to go into the city afterwards, and then to wish General Harcourt good-bye, so you see I have had plenty to do, and it is not my fault that I have not returned before."

"O papa!" exclaimed Alice, "how tired you must be. Do rest now, and have some tea. It is quite ready."

And Alice wheeled the large arm-chair to the table for her father, and brought his slippers, while Edith poured out

a cup of tea, and set it before him, and both the girls begged him to eat something.

But though Colonel Cornewall confessed that he had taken nothing since the morning, except a glass of wine and a biscuit at General Harcourt's, he could not eat now. He drank a cup of tea, and then desiring Edith to ring that the things might be taken away, he pushed back the large chair, and threw himself back in it, as if wearied with his long day's work.

The things were cleared away, the curtains drawn, and then Edith and Alice drew near to their father, and each taking a low stool sat down by his side. It seemed to be an old habit with them, and one with which they were all familiar, for as they leant their two young heads against that loving father's knee, he passed an arm fondly round each, and said in a voice in which sorrow was mingled with affection—"For the last time for a very long while." And then he added, "What shall I do without my children?"

"And what shall we do without you, papa?" said Alice; "we, who have never been away from home in all our lives before."

"It will not be so bad as you think, I hope, Alice," replied her father; "I feel sure you will have a very happy home at Mrs. Clifton's. You know you were delighted with her appearance, and with her extreme kindness, when I took you to see her on Wednesday, and liked the look of her home a great deal better than you expected you should, and

I think I have a piece of news to give you to-night, which will make you both look upon it with still more friendly feelings than you did before. I have been to Mrs. Clifton's to-day, as well as to all the other places I mentioned, and we have entered into an arrangement which I think neither of you will find any fault with. What do you say to Dawson's going to live at Mrs. Clifton's?"

"Dawson!" exclaimed both the girls; "why, papa, I thought she was going into Rutlandshire to live with her brother?"

"So she was!" said their father, "but I doubt very much whether she will go now, after she has heard the proposal I have to make to her this evening. The truth is, I went to Mrs. Clifton's to-day expressly to speak to her about Dawson. I told her how she had lived with us for more than seventeen years, and had nursed your dear mamma through her long illness, and I asked her whether, in case either of you should be ill during my absence, which may God forbid! she would allow Dawson to be sent for to take care of you, for that it would be the greatest relief to my mind to know that, should you be ill, your old nurse would be with you to attend upon you. I told her of course what sort of person Dawson was, how she understands everything about everything, and how active and clever she is, in spite of her fifty years, and above all, what a true Christian she is. And when I had told her all this, Mrs. Clifton asked me several other questions about her, whether she had any relations, or whether I thought she would ever go into ser-

vice again. And when I told her she had only one brother, whom she had not seen for years, but to whose house she was going for the present, and that I scarcely thought she would ever take another situation, for she said she was afraid she could never be happy with any other mistress than the one she had served so long, and loved so well, she surprised me quite as much as I surprised you just now, by saying, 'Then you don't think she would come and live with me?' It was such a new idea to me. I could not tell at first what to say, but when Mrs. Clifton explained more fully in what capacity she would require her services, I really began to think that Dawson would not only consent to go, but be very thankful too. It seems that Mrs. Clifton had a widowed sister who used to live with her, and took a great part of her present work off her hands by keeping house, and taking care of the young ladies' clothes, and all such things. This sister died three years ago, and since then Mrs. Clifton has been quite overtaxed with all she has to do, occupied as she is in teaching, and yet obliged to see to everything in the house. Now she thought, when she heard all that Dawson had been to us, that such a person in her house would be a treasure to her, and really I could not but think so too, so I have to propose to Dawson to-night that she should accompany you to Mrs. Clifton's to-morrow, and live with her in the same capacity as she has lived with us for so many years, ever since you two learned to wash and dress yourselves, and no longer wanted a nurse, as a sort of house-keeper, and nurse tender, and sempstress, in short, I don't



quite know exactly as what, for Dawson has been our factotum, and this is what Mrs. Clifton would wish her to be. Now, if you girls like to go and make the proposal to her instead of me, I shall be very glad, for I have told my story once, and shall be glad to stay here and rest, for we have much to talk about yet this evening."

Away the girls went to look for Dawson in the next room, where they still found her folding various articles neatly into two black trunks.

These trunks had been completely packed in the morning, and yet Dawson had been opening and shutting them, and busying herself about them nearly all day, and more than one tear from Dawson's eyes had been shut and locked into them, when no one had been there to see.

Alice was the first to speak; she dashed at once into the subject, and told Dawson a long story about all her papa had said, and all Mrs. Clifton had said, and how much happier they were now, the end of which was that when at length she stopped speaking the bewildered Dawson was just as much in the dark on the matter as she had been when she began.

Then Edith took up the subject, and in a few minutes had explained it all briefly but quite clearly to Dawson's mind, who scarcely stopped to think before she answered—"And it's the Lord's own doing, and no one else. He knows the tears I have shed. He has heard the prayers I have sent up. He saw it was just like pulling my heart out of my body, though I would not say so, lest I should only be

adding to my good master's grief. It's just what the Scripture says, and what I have found to be true this many a day, 'He stayeth His rough wind in the day of the east wind.' Talk about wages! Miss Edith. There's no need to speak of them to me, or to promise me, as you say, as many comforts and privileges as I have been enjoying with you. I have got as much pride as most people, God knows, and have trouble enough to keep it under oftentimes, but, proud as I am, there is nothing I would think it beneath me to do if it could help me to serve the children of her I loved better than ever I loved aught on earth besides."

"And if you love us, we love you too," exclaimed Alice warmly, "and it makes us so much happier to think you will be with us at Mrs. Clifton's. But come, Edith, we must go and tell papa what Dawson says, we must not leave him alone this evening."

The two girls left the room.

Dawson lighted them along the passage, and then she returned to the bed-room, and shutting the door, she locked it, and kneeling down thanked God with tears of joy, that He had looked upon her in her sorrow, and in so wonderful a manner had not suffered her to be parted from the children of her heart.

Then rising from her knees, and going up to a large deal box which stood in a corner of the room, ready corded, and directed—"Mrs. Mary Dawson, at Mr. John Simpson's, Oakham, Rutland," she quietly tore off the card, saying to herself, as she did so, "I'll just get Miss Edith, when she

comes to bed, to put on a bit of paper like those she has put on their own. To think that I am going along with my children! It seems like a dream, but it is no dream, but the truth, the real blessed truth. The Lord be thanked for it!"

## CHAPTER II.

"Nor let Ambition heartless mourn,  
When Babel's very ruins burn,  
Her high desires may breathe—  
O'ercome thyself, and thou may'st share  
With Christ His Father's throne, and wear  
The world's imperial wreath."

CHRISTIAN YEAR.

DAWSON waited long that night before Miss Edith came to put the bit of paper upon the deal box. She prepared the room for her young ladies, took her Bible and sat down to wait for them, but ten o'clock, and eleven o'clock, and even twelve o'clock had struck, and Dawson's eyes had grown very weary, and she had taken off her spectacles, and indulged in more than one little nap, and still her young ladies did not come, and still between sleeping and waking she could hear the sound of voices talking quietly in the next room. How could that loving father send his children away from him that night, when he knew that before the next should come, he should be far out of reach of the sight of the sweet young faces, and the sound of the pleasant voices, which for so many long years had been so dear to his heart, and which for the last few months had formed the one joy of his widowed existence, the one strong tie which still

bound him to the earth over which a deep, dark shadow had been thrown, a shadow so deep, so dark, that but for them it could have known no relief? It was only when the thought of his children crossed his mind, that the bright rays of earth's sunshine fell upon the dark pathway of his future life, and lighted up before him a new prospect of peace and joy. Well might Alice Cornwall say that their father would never have parted with them, his only earthly treasures, if he could have kept them with him. But his regiment was ordered abroad, to a distant and unhealthy climate, where such society as there was would be of a most undesirable sort, and where his children would enjoy no advantages of education. His duty was very painful, but it was quite clear. His children must be left in England. He must intrust his treasure to other keeping than his own. In his distress he knew where to look for a friend to whom he might safely confide his daughters, and this had been the greatest relief to his mind. Mrs. Clifton was his wife's earliest and dearest friend. In bygone years she had been her governess, and long after this connection had ceased, the friendship between them had continued. When Mrs. Cornwall was educating her little girls with a mother's devotion, it was always to Mrs. Clifton that she applied in every little difficulty that occurred to her own less experienced mind, for, as she would often tell her husband, she knew well what a judicious counsellor Mrs. Clifton was, and often during her last illness she had said to him, "If ever the time shall come that you cannot keep the children with you, I know

Mrs. Clifton will be a mother to them for my sake." The time came much sooner than Colonel Cornewall had ever expected, and he wrote at once to Mrs. Clifton. She was settled in London, where for some time she had been occupying herself in the charge of six pupils. Her number was full, but on receiving Colonel Cornewall's letter, she at once resolved on making an exception to her rule, in order to receive into her house the children of her early friend. In a very short time all necessary arrangements had been made, and on the following day, Colonel Cornewall was to leave for Portsmouth, from which place he was to embark, and Edith and Alice were to enter upon their new life at Mrs. Clifton's. It was not surprising that they talked long and late that night. "You will be very happy, I hope and think," said their father; "Alice will, I am almost sure." Edith looked up quickly, "You always think that Alice carries sunshine with her, papa."

Her father smiled, as if in assent, but the smile was quickly followed by a look of sadness. Edith's words had brought her mother vividly before his mind. He had so often applied those very words to her, and told her that she made the sunshine herself in which she seemed continually to delight.

"Perhaps, Edith," he said kindly, "I have more fears for you, especially in a place like school, for though such a home as Mrs. Clifton's ought scarcely to be called a school, and certainly it would not seem like one to many, still it will be such to you who have never been away from home.

But you must make yourself happy for my sake, Edith, if not for your own. I can never be happy myself, if I do not think that you are so." "I mean," he added, "I can never be at rest in my mind," for happiness was not the word which Colonel Cornewall could at that time apply to his own feelings. "I will try, papa," replied Edith, "indeed I will try, and I mean to work very hard, and that you know makes one happy,—don't you think it does?" she asked, seeing a look of dissent in her father's countenance. "I mean, papa, working about right things, employing one's mind properly, studying hard, and not wasting time, don't you think that makes one happy?"

"Happy is a strong word, Edith," he answered. "It depends upon what your idea of happiness is. I confess that I don't think it can be found exactly in the way you say. You will find occupation certainly, and excitement, but I don't think working hard at your lessons will in itself and by itself make you happy."

"Why not, papa," Edith asked, "why don't you think so?"

Colonel Cornewall was silent for a few moments, and then he said, "Why not, Edith? I will tell you why. Because I have tried that road to happiness myself, and found it fail, and I think that as it did with me, so may it do with you."

Both the girls waited eagerly for their father to explain himself more fully. It was so seldom that he spoke of himself, that their interest was greatly aroused; and when he

did not at once continue speaking, Edith said, "Oh, papa, do tell us what you mean. I should have expected you to say just the contrary, for I don't know any one who works harder than you do, and I always think that it makes you happier."

"So it does, Edith dear," her father replied, "for work is duty; and duty brings happiness; and I don't think any one can have experienced more fully than I have how much relief the mind can find in sorrow from having some settled occupation to which it turns habitually and steadily. But for all that, Edith, when I tried to make work the end and object of my life, I failed in finding happiness in it."

"Oh papa!" said Alice, eagerly, "tell us all about it."

And the two girls listened with interest while their father continued, "I could not quite give you the history of my early life this evening, Alice, for it is very late now, and we must remember that you have to go to school, and I to Portsmouth, to-morrow, and it would scarcely be a wise proceeding on either of our parts to sit up all night. But I will tell you a little about myself, enough to explain what I mean, and I do so principally because I think I can see, in one at least, of my dear children, something of the same disposition which marked her father in early days.

"You know that I was the eldest son, and you know too that your grandfather died when I was quite young, and left me the eldest of four children. I remember his death distinctly, though it is now more than thirty years ago. About an hour before he died I was sent for into his room, and



when I came to him he made me kneel down by the side of his bed and gave me his blessing, and then he told me that when he should be gone, I must be my mother's chief comfort. I recollect well the sort of proud feeling which came over me, notwithstanding the sadness which I felt when my father spoke of dying, when he told me that he had great trust in me, for that although I was so young, I had always been a good boy, obedient to my parents, attentive to my studies, and that he felt sure that though I should no longer have a father's authority over me, I should do well, and would never be anything but a joy and comfort to my mother. And that same night when my widowed mother came to me, and with many tears pressed me to her heart, and told me that my father had said truly that I was her greatest comfort, and repeated over and over again that God had been very good in leaving me to comfort her, for what should she now do without me? it made me happy to hear her talk so, and not only happy, but proud too. I felt my own importance, and when I laid my head on my pillow that night, it was filled with thoughts of all I would do, in order to be of use to my mother, and brother, and sisters.

"It was true that I had always been what is called a good boy, for from my very infancy, I believe, partly from being of a quiet, reflective character, and partly from being the eldest child, and consequently my mother's companion during my father's absences from home, which were of necessity very frequent, I had cared little for play, and given my mind early to reading, and to my studies. But now I

resolved that I would set to work in earnest. I was only a child, I knew, and could do nothing for any one now. But I should soon be a man, and if I worked hard, I should no doubt be a clever man, and a rich man, and people would respect me, and I should have power and influence, and no one could tell what I might not one day become. I was always very fond of books, but the books in which I chiefly delighted were those which told me about men who had worked hard in early life, and who, in later years, had reaped the fruits of their labour in a harvest of wealth, and honour, and power.

“My mother saw my efforts, and encouraged them. Often and often did she repeat to me the words which I delighted to hear, that I was her joy and comfort, and that, if my father had lived, he would have been proud of me.

“My masters saw my efforts, and praised me. I was held up as an example to the other boys in the school, and my brother was continually told in my hearing to strive to follow in my steps.

“At length I was obliged to leave home, and go to the Military College, for which I was intended, greatly to my mother's grief, but not to mine, for I felt my own powers, which had been strengthened by continual exercise and constant fostering, and I longed for some wider sphere wherein to exert them. So I worked harder than before, and my success was greater than ever. I gained the prizes for which I tried. I saw my name at the head of every report that

was printed after our examinations, and it was with a proud hand that I used to fold up the paper and direct it to my mother, knowing well how the colour would mount into her cheek when she saw my name at the head of everything, and how she would show it to my brother, and tell him that I was a comfort to her, and an example to him."

"Oh, papa!" exclaimed Edith, when her father paused for a moment. "Oh, papa! you *must* have been happy then! your mother so proud of you! and you getting everything you wanted!"

"No, Edith," said her father quietly, "I was not happy. I remember well, indeed I can never forget the feeling, for it lasted for many, many years, the sort of want there was in my heart during all that time, and for a long while afterwards.

"I recollect once lying on the ground, and watching a great tree which a party of men were trying to uproot, its branches were spread so far and wide that it seemed as if they could never succeed, and I thought what a tremendous gap it would leave behind, and how every one would miss it. I thought I should like to resemble that tree, to stand so boldly and firmly in the earth, with my branches spread widely above, and my roots extending yet more widely beneath, and neither the sun nor the storm able to hurt me, and how if I should be removed, it would leave a tremendous gap, and men would miss me and mourn for me.

"I did not visit the spot again for weeks, but when I did, the tree was gone, the new earth spread around the

place where it had been, fresh young trees were planted there, and at some distance from the spot lay the old log, which two men were cutting with their hatchets, while the branches, split and tied into bundles for fire-wood, were being carried away in a cart. I remembered having felt a wish to resemble that tree, and the thought passed across my mind, 'should I wish to resemble it in its end also?' It had served its purpose, and now no one cared any more about it, the gap had been quickly filled, young trees were preparing already to take its place, in a very short time there would be none to remember that it had once stood there. Would it be so with me? Even if I should rise, as I so earnestly desired, to a certain position of usefulness and influence, would the end be that I should be cut down, and carried away, the place that had known me quickly filled by another, my very name speedily forgotten amongst men? This question arose in my mind, and, young as I was, I had experience enough of the world and its ways to answer it. I knew it would be so. I had seen it where others were concerned. And of course it would be the same with me.

"I went home to the College in very low spirits. A feeling of discontent had taken hold of me. And though I was as diligent as ever at my books that day, somehow or other much study was becoming to me a weariness of the flesh.

"It happened, or rather I ought to say it was so ordered, for it had a lasting influence on my mind, that that evening Colonel Parkinson came into the room where we were study-

ing, and asked if one of us could take a note for him to a fellow-student who had been obliged to leave the College on account of his health, and was living with his mother in the town. I was standing at a window apart from the others, looking out in a thoughtful dreamy way, upon the still summer evening, and he turned to me, and asked if I would go. Of course I said 'Yes,' and giving me the note, he desired me to wait for an answer. 'You had better ask to see Ratcliffe,' he said, 'he is very ill again, and he would consider it kind if you asked to see him.' Of course I said I would do this also, though Ratcliffe and I had never been friends or companions. His character had stood as high, or higher than that of any other boy during the whole of the time he had been with us, and yet I had always had a sort of contempt for him, I suppose because, no doubt in consequence of his delicate health, he had never been able to make much way in the school, either in his studies or in anything else.

"I asked to see him, however, and was shown into a small parlour, where he lay on a sofa, looking so pale and thin that I started at sight of him. His mother was reading to him, but soon after I came in she went away, and left us alone together.

"'Will you thank Colonel Parkinson for his kind note,' he said, 'and will you tell him my mother will answer it for me? I should do so myself, only I am too weak now even for that;,' and he held out his long white hand,

smiling as he did so, and adding, 'It is not worth much now, is it?'

"If it had been my hand instead of his, and I had been lying there in his place, I felt that I could not have smiled as he did, and I could not help telling him I was surprised to see him so cheerful. At this he smiled again, and said, 'You would not be surprised at it, if you knew how much cause I have to be cheerful. Do you know, Cornewall, I am happier now than I have ever been in my life?'

"'What!' I said, 'when you are so ill, and —' I checked myself, and Ratcliffe took up my words, 'and going to die,' he said; 'you need not be afraid of putting the thought of death into my mind, Cornewall, for it is there all day. And do you know it is a very pleasant thought, for though one naturally shrinks from the idea of death, to me it will be the beginning of a new life, a life of happiness and rest, such happiness and such rest as one can never know on earth, as one could never know anywhere, if it were not for the good mercy of God shown to us for the sake of His Son Jesus.'

"I used to think Ratcliffe had rather an unmeaning face, and a dull, heavy expression, but when he said these words, his whole countenance lighted up, and I thought I had never seen anything like the brightness which came into his large blue eyes, he looked to me for the moment perfectly beautiful.

"I think he must have remarked my look of interest and astonishment, for he raised himself upon the sofa, and

went on speaking : ‘ It may seem strange to you, Cornwall, I dare say it does, to hear me say so, but indeed I would not change places with you, or any fellow in the College, for anything which you could offer me. There was a time when I used to be tempted to envy many amongst them, and you in particular. For I was weak, and not good for much either in mind or body, and I feared that I should never be anything but a burden on my poor mother. But God took away those thoughts from me some time ago, and showed me clearly that whatever He saw fit to send, it was my duty, my work on earth, cheerfully to submit to. And I think it was when He saw that my will was resigned to His, that He allowed me to become more ill. And now,’ he continued,—and again the beaming expression came into his face, and he spoke in a strong, firm voice, quite unlike the quiet, timid Ratcliffe of former days,—‘ and now He is taking me away, to honour and glory which I should never have known on earth, no, not if I had been the strongest and cleverest amongst us. I used to fancy that I should always be a weak, sickly plant, of no use to my Master himself, or to any one on earth. But now the Master is transplanting me to His garden above, where nothing of His planting ever fades or withers, and there I, even I, shall live and grow, and flourish, in the courts of my God.’

“ He stopped speaking, and I could not answer him. At this moment his mother returned, and telling me in a kind voice she hoped I would not think her unkind, but that her

son had been talking already too long, she begged me to come again whenever I liked.

"I wished Ratcliffe good-bye.

"He said, 'I hope you *will* come and see me sometimes, but it is not likely I should remain here much longer. I trust we may meet again in a better world than this. And will you make this my message to any of them who may ask for me?'

"My visit to Ratcliffe did not tend to lessen my thoughtfulness. It was strange, I thought, that he should have spoken about a tree, and its being, not uprooted and carried away, and forgotten, like the one that had been in my mind, but transplanted, and kept alive for ever.

"I can't tell you what an impression that visit to Ratcliffe made on my mind. I never saw him again. He died two days afterwards. I helped to carry him to the grave, chosen, not as the others were, because I had been one of his favourite companions at College, but because I had been the last to see him, and his mother said he had spoken constantly of me during the last two days of his life.

"I must not tell you more about my last few months at College. They were very busy ones, for I was preparing for my final examination, and had to study constantly. Other thoughts would sometimes press eagerly into my mind. The sight of Ratcliffe's grave, which we passed every Sunday on our way to church, or of that particular spot in the grove where the young trees were growing up fast around the place where the large tree had stood, would bring vividly be-



fore my memory the feelings of that day when I came home so thoughtful from my walk, and went to see Ratcliffe. But these feelings were always set aside, and, as usual, I gave myself heart and soul to my studies. I gained all I wanted to gain. My name stood first on the list. And very proud I went home to my mother's for a short time, to be, as usual, praised, admired, and flattered, and then a few months afterwards I embarked in earnest upon the sea of life. Some day I will tell you more about my early sailings on that perilous voyage, but now I must not linger. You know how I went abroad, and how success followed me everywhere. I have often thought since that success was the particular snare which the great enemy prepared for my soul, knowing as he well does the disposition of each, and that this was the pit-fall into which one of my character was most likely to fall. I grew proud and ambitious, most eager to get on in my profession, and to rise higher and higher, but not happy, no, Edith,"—for Edith's large dark eyes were fixed upon her father's face,—“not happy.

“I had never felt really happy or contented since the day I went to see Ratcliffe. Every night I lay down to rest with the feeling that I had gained all I had tried to gain, and yet that there was a void at my heart, an empty place which it seemed as if nothing could fill, and often when the world was at its brightest, and others congratulated me and envied me, it all seemed so dark and dreary that I looked back with envy upon young Ratcliffe, lying pale and worn upon his sofa, with that bright, heavenly expression of face, and going

out of this cold, mocking world at peace with God, and himself, and everybody else.

"At length I came to the conclusion that Ratcliffe was happy and satisfied, because he was religious, and that I was unhappy and dissatisfied because I was not religious.

"So I thought I would change. I threw my whole mind into it, and worked as hard to become religious as ever I had worked to become honoured and to gain wealth. I went to church regularly, and to the sacrament, and made our men do so also. I interested myself about the school, and looked after the poor, and did all I thought other people did, who were, as I wished to be, very religious. But I did not succeed. The dissatisfied feeling still remained in my mind. The empty place in my heart was empty still. It seemed as if nothing could fill that void. It was just at this time that we were ordered to Malta, and then a new era began in my existence."

Colonel Cornwall paused, as if the remembrance of that time almost overpowered him, and neither of the girls asked him to go on, for they knew that it was at Malta that their father had first known their mother, and they felt that it must cost him no small effort to speak of that time.

They waited silently until he continued speaking. "You know that it was then I first became acquainted with your mother. We were distant connections, as you know, and I had letters of introduction to her father, who held a high situation in the island. He received me most kindly, and we became very intimate. It was my first acquaintance

with a truly pious family. They were unlike any people I had ever seen before. Anything like the happiness, the peace, the social cheerfulness of that household I had never yet seen; I had often dreamt of such things, but now I saw them realized. And the presiding spirit of all seemed to be your mother, the eldest of the family.

"I had not been at Malta many weeks before she who was the principal mover in that happy household became the one object of my thoughts and affections. The one ambition of my life then became to gain her regard, and in this I hoped to succeed, for we had many tastes and feelings in common. For the first time in my life I was disappointed. I threw my whole heart and soul into my endeavour, as I had never done before, but I did not gain the object I desired. I proposed for your mother, and was refused."

The girls looked up in surprise.

"Oh, papa!" exclaimed Alice.

"Yes, Alice, I was refused. I did not then know why, for many little things had led me to imagine that your mother liked me, but I knew why afterwards, and could see a yet higher reason in another mind than your dear mother's. She saw that my heart was not given to God, that she held the first place in my thoughts, and she would neither take that place which rightfully belonged to God, nor could she join herself in marriage to one who was not, like herself, the servant of Jesus, whose object was not, as hers was, the glory of the Saviour. She knew that two cannot walk together unless they be agreed, and that she could not have

given her hand to me without alienating her heart from God. It was a bitter trial, but it was a blessed one, one of those chastenings, and how many they are, which seem grievous at the time, but afterwards, when we are exercised thereby, yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness. That trial brought me to God. I saw everything in a new light,—myself, the world, sin, and the Saviour.

“I left Malta immediately afterwards, and did not return for years, and I cannot tell you all I went through during that time, but when some time afterwards I returned, I was a changed man. I knew it myself, and your mother knew it too, and when I again ventured to propose for her, I was no longer refused. We were married, and came home to England, and from her I learned many a holy lesson. She first led me to see the ruling fault of my character, and from her I learnt that happiness is not given to us *for* our work, but that it is given to us *in* our work, when that work is done from love to Him who has done all and everything for us. She taught me how to work aright, and—but I cannot tell you all she taught me, nor all she would have taught you, if God, in His wisdom which is beyond our poor understanding, had not seen fit to take her from both you and me, when it would seem to our short sight we most needed her to remain with us.”

Colonel Cornewall stopped speaking; Alice's quiet weeping could no longer be restrained, and leaning her head against her father's knee, she sobbed aloud, while Edith's face was more still and pale than before.

The clock struck twelve, and the sound reminded their father that it was not an hour for those young creatures to be up.

"There is twelve o'clock," he said, "and you still up, and with a fatiguing day before you to-morrow. It was very wrong of me to keep you talking, I did not intend to tell you so much, but I was led on and on, and we shall not have an opportunity of talking together for a very long time. But now you really must go to bed. Alice, dear child," and he raised her head, "indeed you must not give way, you know you promised you would not. And I have a present to give you both, my parting present, and I want you to look at it."

Colonel Cornwall drew from his pocket two morocco cases, and gave one to each of his children. Alice had endeavoured to compose herself, and had dried her tears, but they fell again abundantly as she opened the case, and looked upon the likeness of her mother, encircled with a lock of her fair hair.

She could not thank her father, but left all thanks to Edith, who threw her arms around his neck, and said, "Oh, thank you, thank you, dear papa. It was the only thing we wanted, Alice and I have so often wished that we had a picture of dear mamma just like yours."

"I need not tell you to look at it often. I hope I need not tell you to let it remind you of all that your mother was herself, and of all that she most wished you to be. Oh, Edith, oh, Alice, when your father returns to England, after

his long weary absence, should it please God to spare his life, let him find his children all that the children of such a mother ought to be. And now good-night, God bless you, and keep you in His care."

Oh, what a "good-night" that was! the last they should give that beloved father for so many years.

Alice hung about his neck, and seemed as if she could not leave him, until Edith drew her away, telling her that "Papa as well as they, needed some rest."

And together they went to the room which had been prepared for them.

## CHAPTER III.

"Now in thy youth beseech of Him  
Who giveth, upbraiding not,  
That His light in thy heart become not dim,  
And His love be unforget;  
And thy God in the darkest of days will be  
Greenness, and beauty, and strength to thee."

BERNARD BARTON.

THE day before had been bright and pleasant as days in September often are. But the next morning was cloudy and dreary, and the cold damp air which blew into Edith's and Alice's room when they opened their window, brought with it a feeling of the coming winter.

"It is a dreary day," said Alice.

"I am glad of it," replied Edith, "I like the weather to be miserable when one is miserable one's self. I hate to be feeling wretched, and to see everything bright around me. It just seems as if the sun were mocking at one, and shining away up in the sky, as if in contempt of our griefs and troubles down below."

"But it won't be a nice day for papa's journey to Portsmouth," said Alice, "and if this wind increases, he will have very disagreeable weather for embarking, and getting out of

the Channel. I wonder if papa is up, Edith? He ordered breakfast at eight, and it is nearly seven now. Do let us make haste not to keep him waiting."

"Oh, here's Dawson," said Edith, "she will help us. Do you know, Dawson, if papa is up?"

Dawson said "Yes he was, and in the sitting-room, but he had told her not to call her young ladies, for they had sat up late the night before; he had desired her to say they need not hurry, he could wait until half-past eight." They did hurry, however, for they would not leave their father alone, and it was not long before they joined him at the breakfast-table.

The form of breakfast was gone through, but if last night no one had felt any inclination to eat, their appetites had certainly not improved since then, and though each pressed upon the other the toast, and eggs, and rolls that stood upon the table, they had remained untasted when the waiter came to remove the things.

Colonel Cornewall desired that if any one came for him, they might be shown into another room, as he should be engaged for a short time, and did not wish to be disturbed. And when the waiter had left the room, he begged Alice to call Dawson, that they might all join in prayer. The 121st Psalm was read in a voice of deep earnestness, which neither of the girls ever forgot, and then the father commended his children to the keeping of that God of Israel, whose watchful eye never slumbereth nor sleepeth, and prayed for a blessing both upon them and on the faithful friend who had



watched over them from childhood, and who he thanked God was to be with them still.

When they rose from their knees, Edith, as well as Alice, was overcome by her tears, whilst Dawson hurried from the room that no one might see what she was feeling. Colonel Cornwall himself was outwardly calm, he had passed through too many deep waters not to have learned that secret which is only known to those who have gone through much suffering, how to close the flood-gates upon the deep tide of feeling which must not pass beyond the heart into the stream of outward expression. But the firmly-set mouth and the extreme paleness of his face showed plainly how deeply he was feeling, and when Edith and Alice followed Dawson into the next room, he was thankful to have those few moments to himself, for he could not have spoken to them.

The cab drove to the door. The bell was rung, and the waiter desired to tell the young ladies that Colonel Cornwall was ready. Boxes were brought down, cloaks put on, a few moments of bustle and hurry, and then they were all on their way to St. John's Wood.

No one spoke during the drive, but the thoughts of each were busy. The expression of Edith's face betokened the nature of her thoughts. They were of unmingled regret, sorrow, and disappointment. She had deeply felt her mother's death, and the one thought that had brought her comfort was that for the future she should be her father's chief support and comforter. During her mother's long

illness, the principal part of the household duties had naturally devolved on her, and, young as she was, she had proved herself fully equal to the charge intrusted to her. Thoughtful and discerning by nature, with a clear head, a retentive memory, and great energy and decision of character, many had wondered to see with what success she had for months kept house so carefully, that during the whole of her mother's illness nothing had been allowed to fall into disorder. Edith was fully aware of the admiration she excited, and valued it highly; she dearly loved importance, and quite expected to retain her position in her father's household, and to become at sixteen as fully her own mistress as though she had been grown up. But Colonel Cornwall was alive to the ruling faults in his child's character, and knew that by keeping her with him now, deprived as she would be of her mother's judicious influence, and exposed to the admiration of foolish and ill-judging friends, these faults would naturally become so fostered and strengthened that it would be almost a matter of impossibility to uproot them, and she would become an imperious, haughty, and over-bearing character. There was nothing to be done but to send both her and her gentle, loving younger sister to Mrs. Clifton's school. It was a sad trial for poor Edith's pride, and as she dwelt upon it now, her feelings were all of sorrow and vexation.

Not so Alice. Much as she grieved at parting with her father, still there was something in the thought of the new life which was to begin for her to-day which was not unpleasing. Ever since her mother's death, Alice's gentle, de-

pendent nature had felt the want of some one to lean upon, some stronger and wiser mind than her own, to whom she might look for guidance and counsel as she had ever done to her own dear mother; and at the sight of Mrs. Clifton's kind face, the hope had sprung up in her heart, that now perhaps the absent place might be—not filled, for it seemed to Alice as if no other friend could ever fill such a void as that,—but as if she might now perhaps find a friend whose love and counsel would lead her to feel less bitterly the loneliness of her situation. Besides, Edith and she, although only sisters, had never been as intimate as the nearness of their ages would have warranted. The fault, Alice had always thought, lay in herself, in her inferiority to her elder sister. Edith was so much cleverer, so much wiser, so much better than she was. It was not to be expected that she should lay aside her more serious occupations and studies to attend to her younger sister's more childish ideas and fancies. So that Alice had often longed for some young companion who would be able to enter more fully into her feelings than Edith could be expected to do,—some one who, like herself, would find it difficult always to do right, and give her mind to study and work, and who would sympathize in her many follies and weaknesses. Perhaps she might meet with such a one at school, and if so, it would be very pleasant. These thoughts were in Alice's mind as they drove towards Mrs. Clifton's, and hope was mingled with sadness in the expression of her countenance. Colonel Cornewall thought, as he watched her face, that he had never seen her look so like her

mother. And when he turned his eyes from her to Edith, it struck him that perhaps she looked now as he himself must have done in the days when, proud, energetic, and ambitious, he was seeking what he had not found.

The cab stopped at the gate of a large and comfortable house, which stood back from the road in a small garden. The loud bell was rung, and the heavy gate opened to admit Colonel Cornewall, his children, and the faithful Dawson. It closed again with a loud noise. It seemed to Edith like the sound of a prison-gate, shutting her out from the world beyond, and with it from all liberty and independence. To Alice it seemed like a protecting voice, warning off the dangers and snares of the outer world, and introducing her into a new sphere of hope and happiness.

Colonel Cornewall's time was very limited, and perhaps it was as well that there should be no more time for any last words, or for many parting embraces. He could but fold them tenderly in his arms, repeat again the earnest prayer that God would watch over them and keep them ever in His care, and then with a few words of thanks and friendship to Mrs. Clifton, and of parting kindness to Dawson, he was gone.

Mrs. Clifton left the sisters for a little time alone with Dawson, thinking rightly that their grief would find freer vent with no stranger eye to look upon it, and that Dawson would best know how to comfort the sorrow of those whom she had loved and tended from childhood.

When she returned to them, and offered to show them

their rooms, and to introduce them to their young companions, she was struck by the different manner in which each accepted her offer. There were no signs of tears on Edith's face, but it was pale and grave, and she rose with an expression at once of pride and indifference to follow Mrs. Clifton. Alice's face was wet with tears, but a bright smile passed over it at the sound of the kind voice which addressed her, and she rose quickly and gratefully.

The house was roomy and most comfortable, and quite unlike all Alice's ideas of school.

They went into the large, well-furnished dining-room, and into the library, which was a very pleasant room, lined with book-shelves, and opening into the garden. Mrs. Clifton said the girls might come here whenever they liked, and that there were no books in the shelves to which she was not willing that they should have free access. "The girls are in the study now," she added, "preparing for their French master; we had better see the bedrooms, and then we shall join them there."

What pleasant bedrooms those were! In no room were there more than two beds, such pretty white beds, and everywhere around was comfort.

Edith and Alice shared the same room, and even Dawson's careful eye failed to discover any fault in it. To Alice's delight, it looked upon the garden, and although but few of the summer flowers now adorned it, there was a pleasant look in the green shrubs and neatly-rolled walks, and it was far pleasanter to look down upon them than upon the dusty

high road with its ceaseless train of cabs and carriages. So Alice and Dawson both thought, and the expression of their faces showed their satisfaction.

Edith's countenance, however, expressed nothing but proud indifference to everything around her, as she silently followed Mrs. Clifton from room to room, until she led them through a passage into the large study, where the other girls were assembled preparing for their French master. There was something cheering in the sight of those busy, happy-looking young faces, seated around a table which stood in the middle of the large, comfortably-furnished room, one end of which was taken up by a long low bookcase, while in different parts stood the piano, and harp, and globes, and all around were writing-desks, and work-boxes, and the various other signs of young people's different occupations.

Alice liked the appearance of busy life which the room presented, and she looked with interest upon the girls who would in future be the daily companions of her toils and pleasures.

They were six in number. Two sisters, who were twins, Alice thought, from their similarity of size and appearance, were copying or translating something from the same book; Mrs. Clifton introduced them as Julia and Marion Carter, gentle, fair-haired girls, who looked as if they could not be otherwise than pleasant amiable companions. Two other sisters were there also, Anna Maitland, a tall, good-looking girl of seventeen, and her little sister Lucy, a child of

eleven, who sat close to her elder sister's side, and looked up timidly at the sight of strangers.

There was one girl sitting apart from the rest, apparently quite absorbed in her writing, whose appearance arrested even Edith's attention, and caused her for the first time to feel as if she could take an interest in something in that house. She was a very striking looking girl, about Edith's own age, and old looking for her years, though not tall for her age. Her thick dark hair was taken back from her face, and showed to full advantage the regularity of her features, and the determined expression which marked her whole countenance. No one could look even casually upon her without remarking the peculiarly firm expression of the dark eyes, and small but firmly-set mouth. She just looked up when Mrs. Clifton and the two girls entered the room, and having given the strangers one hurried glance of scrutiny, just such a glance as Edith herself would have given under similar circumstances, she returned to her writing without seeming to concern herself any further about them. Mrs. Clifton, however, addressed her by name, and she laid down her pen, and rose to be introduced to Edith and Alice, as Dora Milford. This over, she resumed her seat and her pen, and seemed entirely to forget their presence.

One little girl alone now remained a stranger by name, and she was the one of all the others in whom Alice felt interested, simply because she was dressed, like herself, in deep mourning, and had such a sad quiet look upon her

little pale face, that it seemed to Alice to tell a whole story, full of interest and sorrow.

“Come to me, Minnie dear,” said Mrs. Clifton, and the girls remarked that, gentle as her voice always was, it assumed a tone of still greater gentleness in speaking to this little pale girl; “come here, Minnie, and make friends with these two young ladies, they know some of your friends, and have been living in your old home.”

Little Minnie came very quietly and somewhat slowly,—she looked as if she could not do anything otherwise than quietly and slowly,—and stood by Mrs. Clifton’s side, with her large dark eyes—Alice thought she had never seen such large dark eyes before—fixed on the girls, while Mrs. Clifton told them she was little Minnie Carpenter, and had come from India many years ago, and since then had lived for a long time in the same place which Edith and Alice had just left.

“I dare say,” she added, “she will soon find some questions to ask you about her old home, but Minnie is not a great talker at any time;” and Mrs. Clifton looked kindly at little Minnie, who smiled, and said, “I shall like to hear about my home.”

“And Edith and Alice will tell you a great deal about it, I am sure,” said Mrs. Clifton, “but now they must go to their room, and prepare for dinner. It will be ready directly.”

Edith and Alice went to their room, where they found Dawson unpacking the black trunks, which she had packed



quite as carefully as though they had been going with their papa to foreign countries, and arranging all their things in the neat chests of drawers.

Dawson was evidently quite content, and when the door closed upon Mrs. Clifton, she expressed her satisfaction to her young ladies—"Well! I never was inside a school before, but if all schools are like this one, I don't think the young ladies that go to them are very much to be pitied. It is a beautiful house, Miss Alice, and all so comfortably furnished, and everything just like home. If my own dear mistress had had the fitting up of this room she could not have made it more comfortable. I am sure we have every reason to be pleased, and very grateful too."

"Yes, indeed we have," said Alice. "I never thought I could have felt half so happy or so hopeful at the idea of living here, as I do now,"

But Edith felt neither happy nor hopeful.

Leaning against the window-sill, she gazed vacantly upon the flower-beds below, and could only feel that she was at school. The house might be very pleasant, Mrs. Clifton very kind, but it was school for all of that, and at school there 'could be no liberty. And as for the girls, they were school-girls, and as such, doubtless, full of folly and nonsense, girls always were silly, ridiculous companions, and never cared for reading or study, or anything but vanity and folly! But just as Edith came to this sweeping conclusion in her own mind, the remembrance of Dora Milford's determined face and haughty dark eyes crossed her mind,

and led her to think that such a countenance as that could scarcely belong to a weak, unsettled character. "I wonder what sort of a girl she is?" she thought, "clever, I am sure, she never could look like that if she were not clever, and then she has such a high, broad forehead, and such depth and intelligence in her eyes. Yes, I am sure she is clever! and proud, any one can see that in her haughty manner, and the scornful sort of way in which she turns down the corners of her mouth. She just looked up at us, and then turned away as if we were not worth a second thought, I dare say she thinks we are as silly as no doubt she finds the rest of her companions; those two Carters for instance, they look as if they had not an idea between them, and that Miss Maitland, with her pretty face, I dare say she thinks of nothing else all day. But this Dora Milford, I should like to find out what she knows and what she can do. I wonder what she was writing in that book which seemed to interest her so much?"

And Edith remembered Mrs. Graham's praises of her own talents, and how she had said that few girls of nineteen were so highly educated as she was, and the thought arose in her mind that it would be rather pleasant to measure her own powers with those of a clever girl, such as she felt sure Dora Milford must be, and perhaps subdue the pride of that haughty countenance by proving herself to be superior to her.

Meanwhile Alice was telling Dawson all about Minnie Carpenter.

"She is such a sweet looking little thing, Dawson," she said, "I am sure you will love her directly you see her; she is so pale and thin, I am sure she can't be strong. You know papa told us she had lost both her parents, but that was some time ago, I think she must have lost some near relation since then, for she is dressed in such very deep mourning."

"I know who she is quite well, Miss Alice," replied Dawson, "and if she is like her mamma, she must be a very sweet young lady. Her papa was quartered in the same place with us for some time, though it's too long ago for you to remember, and I recollect well when this little girl was born. I believe your mamma told me that her mother was never strong after. It's my opinion, Miss Alice, your dear mamma was very useful to that young lady, for I remember how, when she was ill, she used to go and sit for hours with her, and often she would bring the little girl home to our house, and keep her with us, nursing her and playing with her, because she used to say her own mamma was not strong enough to do so. So you see, Miss Alice, you and little Miss Carpenter have met before, though neither of you can remember it. You could not have been more than three or four years old, and she had scarcely learned to run alone when they were ordered away. I used often to ask about them afterwards, and my mistress often told me that she had had letters from Mrs. Carpenter, and that she kept very weak and delicate, but had her mind so fixed on heavenly things that it was quite a pleasure to hear

from her. And I remember when she died, Major Carpenter wrote your mamma a long letter about how happy she was, and how much she had spoken of your dear mamma on her death-bed, and your mamma read me parts of the letter, because I had known the poor young lady well, and had always taken interest in her and her little baby."

"I dare say," said Alice, "it was mamma who advised little Minnie's papa to send her to Mrs. Clifton's."

"Most likely it was, Miss," said Dawson, "and I am sure you will be great friends together, if it is only because your mamma and hers were great friends too."

All Dawson had told her served considerably to strengthen the interest which Alice already felt in little Minnie Carpenter, and when she and Edith joined the rest of the party at dinner, she was glad to find that Minnie's place was next her own.

The afternoon continued so rainy that there could be no going out, and after the French lesson was over, during which Edith and Alice had been sitting working in the study, as they were not to begin their studies until the following week, Mrs. Clifton left all the girls together, in order, she said, that they might become better acquainted with each other.

## CHAPTER IV.

"Yet even in youth companionless I stood,  
As a lone forest bird 'midst ocean's foam;  
For me the silver cords of brotherhood  
Were early loosed; the voices from my home  
Pass'd one by one, and melody and mirth  
Left me a dreamer by a silent hearth."—MRS. HEWANS.

THE only one of the girls, however, with whom Edith Cornwall felt the slightest inclination to make acquaintance was Dora Milford, and there did not seem much probability just at present of this wish being gratified.

Edith was a great deal too proud herself to make the first advances, and as for Dora, no sooner had Mrs. Clifton finished speaking, and left the study, than she seemed entirely to forget that there were such people as Edith and Alice Cornwall in the room. She quietly put away her papers in her desk, placed the desk on a side-table, and taking down a book from the shelves, established herself comfortably in a distant window, and began to read, evidently looking upon a half-holiday as a very good opportunity for indulging a quiet reading.

Edith went on with her work at first, but she felt as if

all the girls were looking at her, and expecting her to talk, and perceiving that Anna Maitland was very anxious to begin a conversation in which she did not feel any inclination to join, she shut her work-box, and following Dora's example, took a book, but she could not succeed in fixing her attention upon it; she was quite angry with herself for feeling so provokingly interested in Dora Milford, but every now and then, in spite of her own efforts not to do so, she found her eyes wandering towards the corner where Dora sat quietly reading, and her curiosity was excited to know what Dora could find so interesting in the book, the leaves of which she was turning over so rapidly.

Anna Maitland, perceiving that Edith Cornewall was not a very accessible sort of girl, tried her powers upon Alice, and finding that it was very easy to succeed with her, had entered into quite a lively conversation with her, when a servant came to say that some ladies were waiting to see Miss Maitland in the drawing-room, and Mrs. Clifton had desired that she might go to them.

Alice, however, was not sorry to part with her new friend, for although she had been chatting with her very pleasantly, she was longing all the while to make further acquaintance with little Minnie, who was drawing at the large table; and as soon as Anna Maitland left the room, Alice went and sat by her, before any of the other girls should come to take Anna's place.

"How nicely you draw!" said Alice, for she was struck

by little Minnie's proficiency, " you must have learnt a long time."

Little Minnie blushed crimson, half from shyness at being spoken to by a stranger, and half from pleasure at being praised, for Minnie's chief happiness lay in her drawings.

Alice repeated her admiration of the drawing, and Minnie, emboldened by the peculiar softness of Alice's voice and the gentle expression of her face, looked up timidly, and said, " I have not learnt very long, at least not from a master. I used to draw a great deal when I was at home with papa."

" And did your papa teach you ? " asked Alice.

" No," said Minnie, " he did not teach me. I don't think he knew how to draw himself, but he liked to see me draw, and always praised my drawings, and he used to tell me how well my mamma drew, and show me some of her pretty drawings, and I used to try so much to do mine well to please him."

" My mamma knew your mamma very well," said Alice, " and she loved her very much."

Little Minnie's shyness seemed to disappear when Alice said these words in a tone of winning gentleness, and laying down her pencil, she pushed aside her drawing, and looking eagerly up into Alice's face, said, " Did she ? oh, I am so glad. Where is your mamma now ? "

" In the same beautiful place, where your mamma is, Minnie," replied Alice, " they are both living together in Heaven with Jesus and the holy angels."

"And your papa? is he there too?"

"No," said Alice, "but he is going a very long way off, we shall not see him again for many years."

"But he will come back," said Minnie, in such a voice of sadness that it made Alice's heart ache to hear her, "you will see him again. A few years will soon pass away, and then, though you cannot have your mamma with you, your papa will come back, you will have him again. But my papa will never come back to me either. They are both gone—*both*," she repeated. "I shall never have a papa or a mamma again."

"Oh, you must not say that, Minnie," said Alice. "I can't bear to hear you talk like that," and she drew the little girl nearer to her, and spoke in a low, sweet voice, so that only Minnie might hear. "You know what you have just said to me, and I say it quite as truly to you. A few years will soon pass away, and then, Minnie, if you are good and holy, as your papa and mamma were, you know you will see them again, for you will go to them in Heaven, though they will not come back to you on earth."

But Alice's words did not seem to comfort Minnie. "Heaven is such a long way off," she said, "such a very long way off. I can't fancy anything about it. And even if I were to be good enough to go there one day, I am only such a little girl now, and I may have to live so many, many years, always wanting my papa and mamma, and never able to see them."

Poor Alice scarcely knew what to say, and yet she longed



to say something which might comfort this aching little heart, for it was very sad to see all joy taken away from the heart of childhood ; it seemed to Alice something quite unnatural, for her own early childhood had been one of unclouded brightness, and she had never thought before how sad it must be when the clouds gather thick and fast quite early in the day, and not only obscure the evening hours, but even before noon-day, in the early morning take all brightness away.

“ My papa and mamma are both gone too, Minnie,” she said, “ not to the same place, indeed, for mamma has gone *home* to heaven, and she will never again know any more trouble or sickness, and papa has gone to a distant country, where the climate is so bad that we shall always be uneasy about him all the time he is away from us, and he will have a very hard life out there, and perhaps be ill, with no one to nurse him.”

“ But he will write to you,” urged Minnie, “ and you will get his letters, and write letters back to him, and that will make the distance appear much less great, but I shall never hear about my papa and mamma, and they will never hear about me. It seems to me that if they were anywhere—*anywhere*, however far away, if it were only in this world, that I could stop at school patiently, and think about seeing them again.”

“ But Minnie,” said Alice, “ I wish you could only see the truth, and then it would make you so much happier. Heaven is not so far away. It is quite near, when God

teaches us how to see it. And you can hear all about your papa and mamma whenever you like. You know it is written all about the place where they are now, and the people who are living there, in the Bible, and we may read about it whenever we wish."

But, earnestly as Alice endeavoured to do so, she could say nothing which was of any comfort to poor little Minnie, and it was a relief to her when the door was opened by a servant, who told the girls that tea was ready in the dining-room.

No one was disinclined to obey the summons, for the light was rapidly disappearing from the room.

Dora Milford, still absorbed in her book, had turned her chair with its back to the window, so as to make the most of the little light that remained. Marion Carter, who had been practising at the piano, much to Alice's satisfaction, as it enabled her to carry on her little conversation with Minnie with less fear of being overheard, had long since closed her music-book, and was playing from memory.

The two Maitlands had not returned since they had been summoned to their friends in the drawing-room. Julia Carter had taken her desk into another window, and had been straining her eyes during the last quarter of an hour to finish the description she was giving her sisters at home of Edith and Alice Cornfellow, before they should be called to tea, while Edith, neither knowing nor caring that she was at that moment being described by one of her new companions as "a good-looking girl, with dark eyes and hair,

but evidently very proud and disagreeable," had for some time given up the pretence of reading, and was sitting back in her low chair, apparently asleep, but in reality absorbed in what Alice used to call "one of Edith's brown studies," her busy mind wandering about restlessly and unweariedly, while she neither spoke nor moved.

They found Mrs. Clifton waiting for them at the head of the long table on which tea was prepared, and Edith and Alice were surprised to perceive how much of the freedom of home prevailed at that pleasant meal, and how little there was of that restraint which they had always fancied must be one great drawback to school life.

Mrs. Clifton talked pleasantly herself on all sorts of subjects, and encouraged the girls to talk freely also, and, before tea was ended, Alice had quite forgotten that it was her first day among strangers, she felt already so much at home; while even Edith, although she could not make up her mind to join in the conversation, could not help feeling interested in a great deal that was said. It quite surprised her to see how even such apparently silly girls as Marion and Julia Carter, when drawn out by Mrs. Clifton, could be made to take a part in rational and interesting conversation.

As soon as tea was over, Mrs. Clifton said they might get their work, and they would have their usual reading, it would be much pleasanter for Edith and Alice to get into the ways of the house at once, and would make them feel more at home.

So the table was soon covered with work-boxes and

work-baskets, while Mrs. Clifton herself began the reading, afterwards passing the book round in turn to all the girls. It was a deeper work than Edith would have imagined some of those present were capable of understanding, but whenever they came to any passage which was more than usually difficult, Mrs. Clifton explained the matter in so clear a manner that it was at once reduced to the comprehension of the readers. Various questions were asked by Mrs. Clifton, and Edith observed that the most difficult were always addressed to Dora Milford. Mrs. Clifton avoided asking either Alice or herself many questions, and Edith was glad of it, for with all her pride, she was shy, too, and, never having been accustomed to school, did not fancy being obliged to answer, with the eyes of all the other girls fixed on her.

At length, however, Mrs. Clifton asked Dora Milford a question which, evidently to her very great annoyance, she could not answer,—Mrs. Clifton just looked round the table, clearly not expecting a reply to such a question from any one else but Dora, but Edith had remarked the look of vexation which had passed over Dora's countenance, and the crimson colour, half of shame, and half of anger, which had mantled in her cheek, as she was forced to betray her ignorance before strangers, and the temptation to take advantage of this first opportunity of humbling her pride was too great to be resisted, she looked up from her work, and in a few clear words supplied an answer to the question.

Mrs. Clifton looked at her with pleased surprise. "Very

well, indeed," she said; "have you ever studied this work before?"

"No," Edith replied, "never, but they had read other books on the same subject."

She scarcely, however, remarked the gratification which her clear answer to so difficult a question had afforded Mrs. Clifton, for she was occupied in observing the effect which it had produced on Dora Milford,—the colour had deepened in her cheek, while the first sudden look of surprise which she gave when Edith began to speak had been exchanged for one half of annoyance and half of contempt.

Edith felt that she had gained her point long before she expected to do so, and with very little trouble to herself.

Dora Milford evidently felt that she was no longer the only clever girl in the school.

Little Minnie Carpenter sat quietly listening to all that was going on, she certainly listened, and must have understood more than might have been expected from one so young, for when a question was addressed to her she generally gave a correct answer, but always in the same quiet tone of indifference which marked every word she said, and when it happened that she could not answer, she just said so, and went on with her work, allowing the question to pass without caring in the least whether the next girl answered it or not.

Minnie evidently had no heart for anything,—lessons, work, and play, were all alike to her. If things were to be done, she did them, but she found no more pleasure in one

than in another, all her pleasure had been buried in the grave with the only people she had ever cared about, her father and mother. If she liked drawing better than any other pursuit, it was only because it reminded her more of her parents than anything else did, and brought more vividly to her memory the happy days which had gone by. It was very sad to see her.

Alice thought so, as she watched her little melancholy face, and listened to the low mournful tone of her voice. And Mrs. Clifton doubtless thought so also, for Alice remarked that she looked at her frequently with an expression of longing tenderness, as though she earnestly wished she could find some way of comforting that little wounded heart.

They had family prayers at nine o'clock. The usual evening reading was from the eleventh of John, and Mrs. Clifton read a short, but Alice thought a very beautiful, commentary on the verses which supply the touching accounts of our Lord's tender compassion for the mourning family of Bethany. It was singularly appropriate to her own feelings, and she thought must be quite as much so to Minnie's, and felt quite thankful that she should be listening to such lovely words of holy comfort.

But when she looked at little Minnie, who was sitting just opposite to her, Alice's heart sank within her again, for on Minnie's face was still the same expression of quiet indifference. She listened to all that was read, but it did not seem to bring any comfort to her heart to know that the same Saviour who wept at the grave of Lazarus was now

looking down upon her with tenderest sympathy, and was as ready now to minister consolation to her, as He was then to heal the wounded hearts of the sorrowing sisters of Bethany. Heavenly things and earthly things were powerless alike to produce any effect upon that little heart, engrossed as it was with the one all-absorbing thought of its own loneliness.

When Alice lay down to rest that night, she could scarcely realize the fact that, until that morning, she had not known little Minnie Carpenter, at least not to remember her, so strong an interest had the mourning child excited in her, and so well able did she feel to enter into her feelings.

Alice was sure that she should herself feel just as Minnie did, if it were not that God in His mercy had made her to know and to feel that the mother she had lost was not dead, but only gone before, and that the happy day would surely come when she would meet her again, not in this world of much care and much sorrow, but in that glorious, happy home beyond the skies, where there will be no more weeping or tears, where no one will ever more say, "I am sick," and from which no one will ever more go out.

The day had been an exciting one, and Alice found it difficult to compose her mind to sleep; for several hours she lay awake, thinking of many different things,—of her father going so far away into distant and dangerous lands,—of her mother's happy spirit, freed from all care or anxiety, and rejoicing in the Saviour's presence,—of the new life that was beginning for her to-day, with its varied temptations,—of

the struggle it might be to her to keep in the narrow path in which it was her chief anxiety now to be enabled to walk, and of little Minnie Carpenter, and the deep wound in her heart which she had never yet asked the great Physician to heal.

When at length Alice's weary eyes closed in sleep, it was however with a calm, peaceful expression on her face, for all her thoughts had been mingled with earnest, humble prayers,—for her father, that the great God, who fills all places alike with His ever-watchful presence, might be with him in the distant land, and bring him home again in safety to his children,—for herself, that grace and knowledge might be given to her to walk aright in the new paths into which God had seen fit to bring her,—for Minnie, that she might learn to know and love Jesus, and see how ready He was to comfort all who turn to Him in sorrow.

Edith also had been long in going to sleep that night, but her thoughts were very different from Alice's.

School certainly appeared less intensely disagreeable in reality than in anticipation. They were evidently to be treated much less like children than Edith had fancied would be the case. There were much greater signs of liberty, and when Edith recalled to mind the busy faces which she had seen, when they first entered the school-room that afternoon, intent upon the preparations they were making for their French master, she fancied that it would be rather pleasant to write themes and exercises in competition with other



girls, and then to hear their superiority pronounced by the master.

But the chief thought that occupied Edith's mind was the remembrance of Dora Milford's proud countenance, and with all her heart she resolved that Dora should find in her a rival who would effectually prevent her ever looking upon her again with the sort of contemptuous indifference with which she had treated her in the school-room that afternoon.

## CHAPTER V.

"Yea, from the palaces of Heaven hath Pride cast down his millions.  
Root up the mandrake from thy heart, though it cost thee blood and groans,  
Or the cherished garden of thy graces will fade and perish utterly."

PROVERBIAL PHILOSOPHY.

NINE months only had passed away, and Edith and Alice Cornwall were quite as much at home under Mrs. Clifton's roof as any of their young companions.

Edith no longer thought school a dull, uninteresting place. It was true she had not made any friends, she did not wish to make any, though when first she came and Mrs. Clifton had discovered her superior abilities, she had hoped that she might form a friendship with Dora Milford, who had hitherto stood alone in the school. But such was not the case.

There was much in their character which was very similar. Their minds were very much of the same stamp, their talents very much of the same order. They had many tastes and pursuits in common. They might perhaps have become friends, if they had not first become rivals.

But from the moment when Dora Milford looked up at Edith with that look of cold indifference, and then returned

to her reading without appearing to think her worth a second thought, a feeling of jealous dislike had arisen in Edith's mind towards her, and from the moment when Edith had quietly supplied a ready and clever answer to the question to which Dora could find no reply, that dislike had been returned by Dora with interest.

It was now drawing towards the close of the half year, and the subject which occupied all the girls' minds was the examination which was to take place before they left school for their different homes, and the prizes which were to be the result of it.

At first it had been Mrs. Clifton's intention to allow all the girls to compete for one prize, which was to be awarded to that one who should show most industry and energy in pursuing the various studies assigned to her, but afterwards, on considering how superior in ability Dora Milford and Edith Cornewall were to the rest of their companions, she changed her intention, and decided on giving three prizes, one for which Dora and Edith were to compete together, a second for which Alice, the two Carters, and Anna Maitland were to try, and a third for the two little ones, Minnie Carpenter and little Lucy Maitland.

Afterwards, when Mrs. Clifton discovered what a subject of envy and rivalry this first prize seemed likely to become, she regretted the arrangement she had made, and resolved never again to allow two such determined, ambitious characters as Dora Milford and Edith Cornewall to enter the lists together.

Edith Cornewall had a strong, resolute will, and a power of perseverance which nothing seemed able to daunt, and which, to Alice at least, appeared truly wonderful. Whatever Edith undertook to do, she did. If she attempted anything, whatever difficulties might meet her in the way of its accomplishment, Edith would overcome them all, and by resolute, persevering determination, succeed in her endeavours.

It had been so ever since she was an infant. Even before she could speak, her watchful mother had often directed her father's attention to the resolute expression that would fix itself upon her baby face, as she sat upon the floor amongst her playthings, bent upon building up her bricks, or arranging her toys in some particular way, and never ceasing her attempts until she had succeeded in her efforts. No matter how often she failed, Edith would try and try again, and if it happened, which was not often, that it was a matter of impossibility for her to carry out her childish attempts, the failure would cause her to fall into a violent passion, which it was no easy matter to subdue.

There were many things which Edith did not care to attempt, and she was never inclined to undertake anything in which she felt it was not likely she should succeed, but when once her energies were aroused, and she had resolved upon an undertaking, then she never gave a thought to the time or trouble which it would cost her to accomplish it. All she felt was that the thing was to be done, and she would do it. And this was the case now.

There was a prize to be given, and she was to gain it. No matter how hard the effort might be, she was to gain it.

Not that Edith cared for the prize itself,—though it was to be one of Mrs. Clifton's own drawings, which to Alice would have been a gift of the highest value, for Mrs. Clifton's loving care and kindness had long since drawn towards her the warmest feelings of Alice's grateful heart,—but Dora Milford was to be Edith's rival.

If she failed, Dora would succeed, and the thought of this was not to be borne for an instant. The very idea of the triumphant look which in such a case Dora's proud face would wear, was quite enough to call every energy Edith possessed into action, and to bring every power of her mind into play.

To be outdone by any one was horrible. To be outdone by Dora Milford would be perfectly intolerable. Therefore it was that Edith resolved to exert herself to the very utmost, although, at the same time, her pride led her to determine to do so in such a quiet, and apparently indifferent manner, that to all eyes, except indeed Mrs. Clifton's, it appeared as if Edith Cornwall cared but little whether the prize were won by Dora Milford or by herself.

"Only one week more," said Alice to her sister, as they were dressing one morning in their room, "only one week more, and then it will all be settled. Oh, Edith! I hope it is not wrong to wish so very much as I do to win the prize, do you think it is?"

"Of course not," replied Edith, somewhat shortly, for

she was thinking at that moment of two difficult lines of German poetry which she had to translate that morning, and Alice's question was an interruption to her.

Alice, however, did not perceive this, and went on with the subject, which at that moment was weighing rather heavily upon her tender conscience,—“But you know, Edith, I can't get it without some one else losing it, and if I am pleased, they must be vexed, and it seems wrong to wish so much to get pleasure for one's own self, when one knows it must bring pain to somebody else, don't you think so?”

“I think you are very foolish Alice,” replied her sister, vexed at having been again interrupted just as she thought she had caught the meaning of the troublesome lines which had been living in her mind ever since the day before, and her vexation perhaps increased by feeling what a contrast her sister's tender scrupulous state of mind was to her own.

“I think you are very foolish,” she continued; “do you suppose Mrs. Clifton would give us prizes to try for, if she thought it wrong to wish to get them? I suppose you wouldn't try for the prize if you didn't wish to have it, and, of course, if you get it, somebody else must lose it.”

“Yes, I know,” said Alice; “I don't think, Edith, you quite understand what I mean. I don't think it's wrong to wish for the prize, or try for it, only I should like all the time I am trying and wishing for myself, to feel that the others must be doing so too, and I should like to wish to get it, only because it is right to do one's best, and to please Mrs. Clifton and papa, and not because I should like to feel

that I have done better than Anna, or Marion, or Julia, and that they will be envying me."

Edith made no answer. She was struck unpleasantly by the contrast between her sister and herself.

Why did she wish to gain the prize? Did she care about the drawing itself? Or did she wish to prove to Mrs. Clifton that the trouble she had taken to instruct her during the last nine months had not been in vain, but that she had profited by it, and made progress in all her studies? Or was it that she longed to bring a feeling of pleasure to her father's heart, and was led on to fresh exertions by the thought of the smile which would cross his face in his distant home, as he opened the letter which told him of his child's industry and success?

No, none of these feelings found any place in Edith Cornwall's heart, as day after day she renewed her efforts in pursuit of the desired object. What, then, was her aim? Simply to prove her own superiority,—to mortify another's pride,—to exalt herself in her own opinion, and in that of other people.

The very feelings which Alice dreaded, as her greatest enemies, which almost made her wish that there was no prize to be contested, and against which she was striving constantly, were the chief motives of Edith's mind, her principal incentives to exertion. Pride, vain-glory, ambition,—those most useful handmaids of the great enemy, self,—were leading Edith on, and keeping her energies in full activity, while as Alice saw them in the distance approaching towards her

also, she shrank from the sight, and earnestly prayed to be delivered from them.

Edith and Dora were busily engaged the following morning in preparing for their examination. The other girls were in the school-room, but they were sitting together in the library. They had a difficult task to do,—a series of questions upon the philosophy of history, in order to answer which, much depth of thought was required, as well as much knowledge of history and power of research,—and Mrs. Clifton had told them they had better take their desks into the library, where the books they required for reference would be easier of access, and where they would be more free from interruption. It was the last work they had to do, and that evening all their papers were to be given to Mrs. Clifton, in order that she might examine them during the following week, and decide on their respective merits.

Edith worked steadily for nearly an hour, and hoped she was succeeding almost beyond her expectations. At length she came to a question which caused her to lay down her pen, knit her brows, and think deeply. But although she thought, and thought, no answer suggested itself to her troubled mind. She cast a hurried glance at Dora. She was thinking, too, her elbow resting on the table, her head leaning on her hand, her dark, earnest eyes fixed upon the paper before her.

Dora also was evidently puzzled. Edith longed to know what question was troubling her. She leaned forward to see the paper which was before her, and felt sure that



Dora's eyes were arrested thus intently upon the same question which had so completely puzzled her—the last on the first page of the sheet which Mrs. Clifton had given them to answer.

Edith's own powers of thought seemed to diminish yet more as she made this discovery, for it distracted her mind to feel that the same perplexity was occupying Dora's mind also, and her eyes wandered continually towards the place where Dora sat, so buried in thought, that she never raised them once. Dora looked at the paper, then thought, then looked again at the paper, then thought again. And then a bright idea seemed to flash across her mind, the colour rose to her cheeks, a satisfied look filled her countenance.

She took her elbow from the table, resumed her pen, and wrote five or six lines, then she read them over, and, as she did so, the look of satisfaction on her face was confirmed.

Whatever was the difficulty that had troubled Dora Milford's mind, it was evident that she had overcome it. And having done so, she turned over the page of the sheet of paper before her, and glanced at the questions on the other side.

It was, then, as Edith had thought. It was that last question that had troubled Dora. What would she not have given to have known what bright idea it was that filled her countenance with satisfied intelligence and prompted those five or six lines?

Dora wrote on rapidly. No fresh difficulty seemed to

arise. The remaining questions were evidently very easily answered, for she did not again lay down her pen, or pause in anxious thought over her work.

Edith remained for some time poring over her paper, and then, looking again at Dora, she perceived that this time Dora's eyes were also fixed on her, and that she was watching her with, Edith fancied, a look of proud amusement. Dora had no doubt discovered that the same difficulty which had checked her progress, had checked Edith's also, and that though she had succeeded in overcoming it, Edith had not yet been equally fortunate.

Edith could not bear the idea of her rival supposing this, and also turning over her sheet of paper, she determined to go on with the rest of the questions, leaving a blank space in her book for this one, in the hope that during the afternoon she might be able to find some way of supplying the answer. It was not long before Dora shut her books, folded her paper, and, placing it in her desk, locked it, and left the room, apparently well satisfied with her morning's work.

She had scarcely gone when the dressing-bell rang. It only wanted a quarter of an hour to dinner, and the afternoon would be so full of its own engagements that poor Edith's heart failed her, as the question arose in her mind as to how she could possibly find time to supply the wanting answer. She wrote quickly on to the end of the other questions, but the last word was scarcely concluded when the dinner-bell rang, and Edith, who was always remarkable both for her excessive punctuality and for the neatness of her

appearance, for once was late at the table, and took her place with flushed cheeks, a flurried manner, and hair which bore the marks of only having been hastily smoothed. Dora Milford was sitting exactly opposite to her, looking so provokingly calm and self-satisfied that Edith felt it required some effort to restrain the feelings of anger which were in her own mind.

She could eat no dinner, and was so absent in manner that Mrs. Clifton asked her if she were well, and on her answering, "Yes, thank you, quite well," Mrs. Clifton remarked that she "was afraid she had been worrying herself too much over her work," adding, to Edith's intense annoyance, "You know you must not allow yourself to be unduly anxious about this matter, any more than about anything else. I hope you all remember that although it is quite right to try for a prize, so long as you can do so in a calm and contented spirit, it would at once become wrong if you were to allow this prize to be the occasion of any anxious, or restless, or ambitious feelings."

Mrs. Clifton spoke to all, and the attentive, earnest manner in which Alice Cornwall listened to her words, while the colour deepened in her cheek, showed plainly that she, for one, had been quite ready to listen to the advice given, and apply it to herself.

But Edith fancied that the words were meant only for her, and that all the other girls knew that they were, and she was so indignant at the idea, that she could scarcely restrain herself from saying that she did not care whether the

drawing were given to her or not. Dora's quiet face was more provoking than ever. Her expression did not undergo the slightest change whilst Mrs. Clifton was speaking. She evidently thought there was no fear of any one accusing her of being "unduly anxious."

After dinner came the French master, and he had only just left the house when Edith was summoned to her singing lesson, and when that was over, she had to go with her sister Alice and Anna Maitland to prepare her German with Mrs. Clifton. When they left the library it wanted only twenty minutes to tea time, and Mrs. Clifton had desired them when they came to tea to bring all the papers they had prepared with them in order that she might look them over. As Edith went with a heavy heart and a wearied brain to her own room to try one last hurried chance at the unfortunate history paper, she passed the open door of Dora Milford's room, and within she saw Dora sitting at the table with her desk before her, and a heap of papers on it, doubtless arranging them in readiness for Mrs. Clifton. Edith was passing on, when Dora called to her; the thought crossed her mind that perhaps she did so because she knew that she had had no time to herself since dinner, and wished to deprive her of the few moments that remained before tea. She was determined, however, not again to appear hurried, and therefore stopped, while Dora asked her whether Mrs. Clifton had said anything further about their giving their papers this evening?

"Yes," said Edith, "she has just reminded me to bring mine when I come to tea."

At this moment Mrs. Clifton's voice was heard calling "Dora," and on Dora's replying, "Yes, ma'am," she added, "Quickly, my dear, I want you for an instant."

Dora went. Edith was going to her own room, when her eyes fell again on the papers.

The temptation arose to see what they were. She advanced a step or two into the room, and there, uppermost on the desk, her quick sight, now quickened still more by eagerness, recognized the history paper, open at that particular page, the very words almost within her sight. Oh, how she longed to know what those words were, not with any wish to copy them, but only to satisfy her curiosity! One step more would make her acquainted with them, and without an instant's thought, Edith stepped forward, and glanced over the five or six lines which lay open before her. At that instant she heard, or fancied she heard, Dora returning, and hurrying from the room, she had reached her own in another instant, had shut the door, opened her desk, and taken from it her own paper. There was the vacant space. In her own mind was the required answer. That hurried glance at Dora Milford's paper had been quite enough to supply it. The words she had seen had sufficed to give her a clue to the answer which she felt herself more than able to work out. It only required her to take up her pen and do it. And after a few moments' hesitation it was done.

The empty space was quickly filled. And then Edith placed all the papers together, arranged her dress with even greater neatness than usual, carefully smoothed the thick bands of her glossy dark hair, and with her usual manner of calm determination, obeyed the call to tea.

## CHAPTER VI.

"The man with earthly wisdom high uplifted  
Is, in God's sight, a fool ;  
But he in heavenly truth most deeply gifted,  
Sits lowest in Christ's school."

JAMES BURNS.

THAT day week, Mrs. Clifton came into the study where all the girls were assembled, with two drawings in her hand, one a lovely water-colour of St. Cecilia playing on a harpsichord—the other a pretty pencil-sketch of their house and garden.

"This drawing is yours, Edith," she said, placing in her hands the water-colour, while she added, turning to Dora, "it has been a very fair race on the whole, though not so equal as to leave any matter for doubt."

"And this, Anna, is yours," she said, giving the pencil-sketch to Anna Maitland.

"I hope, Alice, you are not very much disappointed. You come next to Anna on my list of marks, and must have worked so very diligently that I cannot help feeling for your disappointment in such diligent efforts not being this time crowned with success."

Alice *was* very much disappointed, and she was not ashamed to say so; the tears had dimmed for an instant her blue eyes, but Mrs. Clifton's kind, approving words brought a bright smile into her face, and the momentary shade that had passed over her countenance had again given place to sunshine, when she said, "Yes, I'm disappointed, but I am very glad Anna has it, and that I can tell papa I did so well."

"I think," said Mrs. Clifton "that I also must tell papa this, for I have rarely been so pleased with any one's progress or conduct, as I have with yours, Alice, during the last half-year, and I am quite sure you must find in the answer of an approving conscience a better reward than any prize of mine could have secured to you."

Mrs. Clifton knew that Alice could bear praise, and she was not afraid to give it. If she could have looked into Alice's heart at that moment, she would have felt that she was not mistaken. For, as Alice heard those words of approbation, spoken as they were in the presence of all her companions, the first feeling of her heart was, not that others heard them too, not that they had raised her in the opinion of her fellow-creatures, but that God had heard the prayer which she had offered on that first night of her coming to school, and repeated each day since then, and many times during each day, and had given her knowledge and grace to walk aright in the new, untrodden paths upon which she had entered. God had upheld her footsteps, and therefore she had not slipped. From Him had come all the power. To Him must now be



given all the glory. And while Mrs. Clifton was yet looking at her with that look of approving pleasure, and speaking those words of gratified commendation, Alice's young heart was overflowing with happy thankfulness, and, almost unconsciously, the words of grateful praise were winging their way towards the throne of Him who looketh upon old and young alike, without whose knowledge not a sparrow falleth to the ground, and in whose almighty sight the trials and temptations, the endeavours and successes, of the youngest child, or of the most enlightened and important of mankind, are all of equal importance.

And Edith? and Dora?—what were their feelings as they stood there? Edith, with the drawing in her hand, and Dora looking upon her and it with a perfectly calm air, yet with her proud mouth formed into a more scornful look than usual, and a deepened colour in her generally pale cheeks, showing that there was some under-current of feeling at work within which she was determined no outward sign of word or look should betray.

It was the second time that she had felt humbled in Edith's presence, and by Edith's means, and she longed for some opportunity of resenting the mortification. It seemed very unlikely, however, that any such opportunity should occur, for Dora was to leave school at Christmas, and it was not probable that Mrs. Clifton would propose their trying for a fresh prize before then.

Dora, however, bore her disappointment with so much apparent calmness, that even Mrs. Clifton failed to discover

the extent of her vexation, and, addressing both the girls, she said, "I have been very much pleased with your papers. In many things you are very equal, but in German, and in history, Edith has fairly proved her right to the prize. There is not one mistake in your history paper, Edith, and many of the answers do you great credit, for they show that you must have well remembered what you have read. Your history paper, Dora, is not so well done as some of your other subjects, as you will see; some of the questions are not quite correctly answered, and there are two or three mistakes in the different dates."

Edith heard all Mrs. Clifton said, and took the papers which were given back to her. She had then gained her point. She had reached the object for which she had been striving with untiring energy for the last six months. And what was the result? Had the end she had gained brought her the happiness she might have expected? There was a sort of triumph in her mind, certainly, and she felt a kind of fierce pleasure at having proved her superiority to that proud, disagreeable, conceited Dora Milford, before Mrs. Clifton and the whole school. But there was no happiness, no real contentment, in Edith Cornegwall's mind that day.

The drawings were laid aside. The girls took their places at the tea-table, during which Edith tried to enter into conversation as usual, and Dora Milford was so much more lively and agreeable than was at all customary with her, that several of her companions looked at her in surprise, and remarked to each other afterwards that Dora

seemed rather glad than otherwise to have lost the prize, for it was not often that she appeared in such good spirits.

The usual evening's reading was gone through. Prayers followed, and then all went to their rooms. Alice was feeling so unusually happy, that as soon as the door was closed upon Edith and herself, she threw her arms round her sister's neck, and said, "Oh, Edith dear, I am so glad you have got the prize. You will value it so much. And papa will be so glad to hear that you are the cleverest girl in the school, for there was no one able to try with you except Dora Milford, and you have done better than she could. How well she took her disappointment, though! I have always thought her proud, but I really don't think she can be so proud as she looks, for she did not seem a bit vexed at your getting the prize, nor annoyed at anything which Mrs. Clifton said about your papers being so well done. And do you know, Edith, I don't feel at all unhappy now at not having won our prize? I was afraid I might be, but it made up for the disappointment to hear Mrs. Clifton speak so kindly, and say she would write and tell papa that I had worked so hard, and got on well. I am sure papa will be glad to hear it, because you know, Edith, I have never been able to learn as you have, and he will be pleased to think I have taken trouble." "I know I have tried my very best," she added, thoughtfully, but in a very humble tone, "and I think that is why I was so glad to hear Mrs. Clifton speak like that; oh, Edith, are you not happy to-night?"

Alice waited for her sister's answer, and Edith was obliged to speak. "I don't think," she said, "that such things as prizes make one so very happy."

"Oh, no!" said Alice, "no more do I. You know, Edith, I have not had a prize, yet I am sure I could scarcely feel happier than I do this evening. I think it is the knowing that we have done our best that makes us happy, and the getting praise from such a friend as Mrs. Clifton, which we feel we deserve to get, for I am sure I should not care at all about praise if I felt I did not deserve it; should you?"

Again Alice looked for an answer, and this time Edith could not speak. She had been miserable enough the whole evening, but ever since they had been in their room, if poor Alice had been studying how to make her sister feel more unhappy than she did before, she could scarcely have succeeded better.

Edith turned away as Alice asked her last question, and saying abruptly, that "she did not feel well, and could not talk," she began to undress quickly.

Alice's sympathies were roused in an instant. "She was sure Edith had been overworking herself. Mrs. Clifton had remarked at dinner how flushed she looked, and the girls had said afterwards they were certain she had been wearing herself out all the morning instead of taking things coolly as Dora Milford did."

Again poor Alice, intending to comfort, only succeeded in wounding, and Edith, declining her offers to help her to

undress, begged she "would not talk any more, for it only made her head worse."

It struck Alice that even if Edith were feeling ill she need not be so cross, but she reproached herself for allowing this thought to enter her mind, and said no more until they were both ready for bed, when she said, gently, "Don't read this evening, Edith, if your head aches; go to bed, and let me read to you."

And on Edith agreeing to this, she drew the white curtain of her sister's bed, so as to shade the light from her aching eyes, and opening her Bible, read the seventy-fifth Psalm in a low, sweet voice. When she had finished reading, she said, "I chose that Psalm on purpose, because I have thought so much about it lately, when we have all been trying which could get on most, and I wanted to remember it was all in God's hands. But we must not talk now, Edith, I hope your head will be quite well to-morrow."

Alice put out the light, and five minutes after she had laid her head on her pillow, the day's pleasure and excitement were all forgotten in the soft deep sleep which is the especial portion of happy, innocent childhood.

But Edith could not sleep. Far into the night she tossed restlessly from side to side, not wishing, not allowing herself to think calmly and connectedly, for what could calm thought bring to her mind but self-reproach and mortification, but still unable to restrain the struggling restless thoughts which swept in rapid succession across her mind.

Had Alice meant to strike at her conscience when she spoke so innocently about its only making one unhappy to receive praise, and feel how little one deserved it? Had she chosen that Psalm, every word of which had fallen upon Edith's ear and heart, not in the soft, sweet tones in which Alice's gentle voice had pronounced them, but with all the power and bitterness with which an accusing conscience could invest them—had Alice chosen that Psalm on purpose to remind her of Him who, sitting on His throne, judging righteously, says to the wicked, "Lift not up the horn," and to the fools, "deal not foolishly?" Was it meant purposely to bring to her remembrance that great Judge, who at any moment has it in His power to set up one and put down another, and whose sure promise it is that, although sinners may exalt themselves in the earth, the day shall come when the horns of their power shall be cut off, and when the righteous alone shall be exalted.

Edith knew well what right and wrong were. From earliest childhood both had been set before her in their true light, and she had been taught to follow one, and flee from the other. Above all things had Edith learned to despise deceit, and to avoid all paths except the straight, open way of truth. A month ago her proud spirit would have risen in what she would have considered most righteous indignation, if any one had told her that for the sake of gaining a little glory, a small triumph over a rival, she would have demeaned herself to any action, which, if it were known to her companions, would at once render her

despicable in their eyes. And then it was so doubly vexing to think that, if she had not been tempted to this action, if she had never cast her eyes on Dora Milford's paper, or copied the answer from it into her own, she would still have obtained her end, she would still have been found superior to her opponent. Mrs. Clifton had discovered several mistakes in Dora's paper. There had not been one in hers! Oh! how bitterly she now regretted that she had ever seen that paper lying so temptingly open upon Dora Milford's desk! She regretted it, not because she had been led to fall into sin, and to swerve from the path of truth, but because she had thus lowered herself in her own estimation, and because she felt that if ever it was discovered, she would be lowered also in the opinion of her fellow-creatures. To gratify pride she had fallen into sin, and now her sorrow, or rather her vexation and mortification were all occasioned by mortified pride, the necessary loss of self-respect which the committal of a mean action had brought with it.

Edith lay long awake, and when she slept, dreamt troubled dreams, in which she fancied herself reading Dora Milford's paper, and surprised in the act by Mrs. Clifton, who put her to shame by repeating the circumstance to the whole school, and obliging her to confess what she had done in their assembled presence; or, again, she fancied her father in his distant home, receiving and opening a letter, the first part of which contained an account of all Mrs. Clifton had said in praise of Alice, and in the latter part of

which was related the whole story of her conduct with regard to Dora Milford's paper, and in imagination she saw her high-minded father lay down the letter with a grave look and a heavy sigh, and heard him say that if he had reason to be proud of one daughter, he had indeed cause to be ashamed of the other, and that other, the eldest, the one from whom the best things might have been expected, whose allotted duty it was to take the lead in all that was good and noble.

Such were Edith Cornwall's dreams that night, and when she awoke next morning, it was not surprising that her head still ached, and that in answer to her sister's inquiries, she could with truth reply that "she was not feeling any better."

But when Alice begged her to remain in bed, and let her go for Mrs. Clifton, and told her that she was sure Mrs. Clifton would see at once that there was something the matter with her, her sister's words aroused Edith to the necessity of self-control and exertion. She would not for worlds have Mrs. Clifton or the girls perceive that there was anything wrong with her. They would suspect that she had something on her mind. Mrs. Clifton would most probably suppose that it must have some connection with the prize, for she was always so clever in tracing effects to their causes, and she had already remarked Edith's anxious appearance, and the excited state she was in on the day of the examination.

All Edith wished now was, that no one might suspect



she had anything on her mind, and, begging Alice not to be so silly as to think of mentioning such a trifling thing as a headache to Mrs. Clifton, she dressed herself, and went down to breakfast, determined to drive away every unpleasant thought that had been troubling her mind, and to go on in just her usual way.

But it was impossible not to feel a yet greater dislike to Dora Milford than before. And this morning Dora seemed to be bent upon making herself particularly obnoxious to Edith.

There were to be no studies during the holidays, and those girls who remained at Mrs. Clifton's had liberty to employ themselves as they liked, only being required to be with Mrs. Clifton for their usual Scripture class after breakfast, and to go on with the evening reading after tea. The rest of the day was entirely at their own disposal.

The two Carters had gone home, and so had Anna Maitland, and her little sister Lucy. The only three that remained, were Dora Milford, Edith, and Alice, and these three now sat together in the study.

Edith was drawing, and she hoped that Dora would have employed herself in her usual occupation of reading. But Dora took her work, and seemed disposed to enter into conversation in a way which was unusual to her.

Alice was practising at the piano, so that Dora addressed herself to Edith, and asked her "if they had no friends near London, that they remained at school during the holidays?"

Edith said, "No, they did not know any one in London,

and suggested that Dora did not either, as she also stayed at school."

"Oh, yes, I do," said Dora; "you know I have an aunt living in London, Lady Louisa Egerton, but their house is always full in the holidays when the boys come from Eton, and my elder cousins get leave from their regiments to come home, and they can't make room for any one out of the family. But I shall be there so much that it will be almost the same thing as if I were living in the house, and my aunt means to give such splendid parties this Christmas, and I shall go to them all. Mrs. Clifton does not much like my going out so much, I believe, I know she made some objections to papa about it, but papa wishes me to go into society sometimes, especially," she added, rather conceitedly, "such society as one sees at aunt Louisa's."

Edith did not answer, but somehow or other Dora's words made her feel yet more provoked with her than before. She wished now she had not given her an opportunity of talking about her aunt, Lady Louisa Egerton. She had fancied the Egertons had all left town, and gone to spend the Christmas holidays in the country, or she certainly would not have said anything about Dora's not having any friends in London, for she knew that Dora piqued herself not a little on her good connections, not that she had ever said so, but it was easy to Edith to remark the haughty, self-satisfied manner which Dora had often assumed when she had been told that Lady Louisa Egerton was waiting in the drawing-room, and the quietly conceited way in which

she would prepare to go out with her aunt, whilst the carriage, with a coronet emblazoned on its panels, and the liveried coachman and footmen, waited at the door.

Dora, however, did not seem to notice Edith's annoyance, and quietly pursued her subject: "Your papa is dreadfully particular about you, isn't he?" she asked; "I know Mrs. Clifton cited him to papa, as being so very strict, *careful*, she called it, but she did not succeed in getting papa over to her way of thinking. He told me all about it afterwards, and how he had told her that he should be sorry indeed to think that, at my age, I could not even be trusted to go to a party, unless he were there to look after me, and see that I did not get into mischief. I am sure he's right too, for, after all, one might as well be a baby all one's life, as never to be allowed any liberty."

"Papa lets us go out without him very often," said Edith, shortly. "He's not at all strict, and it's quite a mistake to suppose that he is, isn't it, Alice?" she exclaimed to her sister.

At the sound of her name, Alice stopped playing, and asked, "Isn't it what? I did not hear what you were saying."

"Isn't it absurd, to talk about papa's keeping us so strict, and never letting us go anywhere?"

"Of course it is," replied Alice, "I don't think there ever was such a kind papa as he is, and he always likes to give us all the pleasure he can: who ever said anything to the contrary?"

"Dora does," replied Edith, "she says papa keeps us as strictly as if we were babies, and won't let us go anywhere."

"What nonsense!" exclaimed Alice, "I am sure we had as much liberty at home as any one need wish to have, and we often went out with papa."

"Yes, but now your papa is gone," said Dora, "has not he left orders that you are to be shut up here till he comes home, and never go anywhere without Mrs. Clifton,—like birds," she added, laughing in a most provoking tone of amusement, "with their pretty wings cut, lest they should catch sight of something out of reach of their own yard, and try to fly away in pursuit of it?"

"No!" replied Alice, indignantly, while the colour came into her cheeks, and her eyes brightened with anger, "no, of course, he hasn't left any such orders. We may go out, and pay visits too, and we're going next summer to spend all the holidays in paying visits to our different friends, papa told us so himself, and that he had told Mrs. Clifton we were to visit all our old friends, only, of course, he does not wish us to make new ones without his knowing anything about them."

"No?" said Dora, in a tone of surprised inquiry; "well, now, I really should have thought you were old enough, both of you, to be allowed to use your own discretion in making a new acquaintance now and then, and might safely be allowed to judge who was fit to be made a friend of, and who was not. That's just what I say. Your papa is afraid

to trust you. Now papa is quite different; I am sure he thinks me just as well able to take care of myself as he is to take care of me. And I'm sure I'm very glad of it, for I must confess I never could stand being treated like a child; I suppose I have too proud a spirit."

This was more than Edith could bear, and she was meditating some indignant retort, when Alice anticipated her by exclaiming, as she shut the piano so hastily that all the notes rang again—

"What nonsense you do talk to be sure! I declare you put one quite out of patience."

"So it seems," interrupted Dora, quietly, and with an expression of the greatest amusement upon her face; "I really had no intention of putting you both into such a state of excitement, when I innocently made the remark, which seems to be quite a true one, that my papa allowed me to go where I liked, and that your papa didn't, and that I had a great deal of liberty, and you hadn't. I really did not mean to make you both so angry."

"Yes, you did," said Alice, "I believe you just said it because you knew it would vex Edith, and you wanted to vex her, because you are jealous of her. I'm sure she's a great deal cleverer, and—" Alice was hurrying on rapidly, though without the smallest idea of what she should say next, when she suddenly stopped, and, following the direction of Alice's eyes, both Dora and Edith looked towards the open door, where they saw Mrs. Clifton standing with a very grave expression upon her face.

How much or how little she had heard of their conversation they did not know, but they were not a little ashamed at her having heard any part of it, and they all felt they deserved the words of disapproval which it did not often fall to any of their lot to hear.

Alice was questioned as to what had given rise to such words of passionate retort, and she answered with her usual candour,—for even to avoid Mrs. Clifton's displeasure, which perhaps was at this time the heaviest punishment that Alice could feel,—she could not be anything but open and sincere, that “she was very sorry she had lost her temper, but that Dora had provoked her by saying, that ‘she and Edith were kept like babies, and that their papa never allowed them to go anywhere.’”

Mrs. Clifton's face was graver than before as she heard this, and she looked at Dora with so much displeasure, that the girls felt that this was some old subject of complaint.

She only said, however, “Dora already knows my opinions on this matter, and how completely they are at variance from her own. I am very much grieved to find that she seeks to instil into the minds of others sentiments and feelings which she holds herself, and of which she knows I entirely disapprove. We must strive, Alice, however tempted or provoked, always to possess our souls in patience, but I know well how hard a lesson this is to learn, even for those who have given themselves to it for a far longer time than you have, and I can well understand that

it was no small provocation to hear even one word that seemed to reproach the love and tenderness of such a father as yours. Well would it be for all young people if they had been watched over all their lives with the same careful, loving wisdom."

Mrs. Clifton meant no reproach to Dora, or the very different way in which she had been brought up—if she had imagined that Dora would have applied her words to herself, she would not have uttered them.

That Dora, however, did take them home was evident from the impatient manner in which she tossed back her head, and the sort of half-scornful, half-defiant look which curled her mouth.

Alice was perfectly satisfied with the manner in which Mrs. Clifton had spoken of her papa, and no longer cared what Dora said or thought of him. Edith, however, was anything but satisfied. Dora had asserted that she was not trusted, that she had no liberty, that she was treated like a baby. Her blood boiled at such an accusation, and yet she had no means of proving to Dora and every one else, how utterly false it was.

## CHAPTER VII.

"Oh, what a tangled web we weave  
When first we practise to deceive."

HANNAH MORE.

A FORTNIGHT had not passed when the servant entered the room one day with a note and a card upon a waiter, and handed them to Mrs. Clifton, saying, "Two ladies, ma'am. They inquired for you, and for Miss Cornewall."

Mrs. Clifton read the name aloud, "The Honourable Mrs. Graham."

It was evidently quite new to her. And then she said to Edith, "Is this lady a friend of your papa's, my dear? I don't remember his mentioning her name to me."

"Oh, yes," replied Edith, quickly, "we know her very well. She is a great friend of ours."

Alice felt almost thankful that the question had not been addressed to her; she could scarcely have said that Mrs. Graham was a great friend of theirs; certainly she was not a great friend of their papa's, for though he had never said so, Alice felt sure that he did not like her at all.



"Well," said Mrs. Clifton, "we must not keep her waiting. You had better come with me into the drawing-room."

On their way there she asked one or two questions about this Mrs. Graham, where they had known her, whether she had been a friend of their mother's, and inquired where she had been living lately, that this was her first visit to the girls during the time they had been at school. Her questions were all addressed to Edith, and Edith answered them all most readily,—“They had always known Mrs. Graham,” she said, “ever since they were little children,—her mamma had been very intimate with her, she came every day when she was ill. Major Graham had been abroad for some time; he left England very soon after her papa, in consequence of some appointment having been given to him, and Edith could not think how they came to be in England so soon again.”

Alice did not speak, but there was nothing remarkable in this. It was not Alice's way to talk when Edith was there to do so for her.

If Edith's information had not satisfied Mrs. Clifton that Mrs. Graham was indeed one of their oldest friends, the manner in which that lady received the two girls on their coming into the drawing-room must have been quite sufficient to have convinced her of the fact.

Rising quickly from her seat, and even before noticing Mrs. Clifton, she embraced them both with the greatest affection, then apologizing to Mrs. Clifton, for her apparent

want of courtesy, she said, with that peculiarly sweet smile and winning manner which always accompanied her every word, "I must ask you to excuse me, but you cannot think what a delight it is to me to see these dear children again. We have only just returned to England, indeed we only arrived the day before yesterday, and my first visit has been to them. They have been my little pets ever since they were quite babies, and I have missed them sadly all the time we have been separated."

Then, turning to an elegant-looking young lady who sat quietly beside her, she said, "But I must not forget to introduce my niece. This is my only niece, Edith, Lady Georgina Ashton. You know how much I used to wish that you could become well acquainted, and now I trust you will have an opportunity of doing so. We intend to remain three months in town, or perhaps longer, and I am sure Mrs. Clifton will allow you to come to us very often."

And before Mrs. Clifton could answer, she went on to give the girls an account of their sojourn abroad, telling them also that Major Graham's failing health had obliged him to resign his appointment and return to England.

The visit was a long one, but Mrs. Graham talked so much and so pleasantly that it seemed short, and when she rose to take leave, not only were Edith and Alice both confirmed in their old opinion of her, namely, that she was one of the most agreeable and charming of persons, but Mrs. Clifton also had been led to form the same opinion. Her niece was a very striking-looking girl, elegant in appearance,

quiet and self-possessed in manner. She did not talk much, but what she did say was sensible and amiable, and before Edith had been a quarter of an hour in her society, she had formed a most decided liking for her, and a strong wish to see more of her.

It was very unlike Edith to take so sudden a fancy to any one, but then it was not often that she had been introduced to such a decidedly superior, aristocratic-looking girl.

She wished secretly that Dora Milford could have seen her, and heard Mrs. Graham introduce her as Lady Georgina Ashton, and she hoped that Dora had observed that these, the first visitors they had had since they had been at school, came in no hired cab, or coach, but in their own carriage, with liveried servants, equal in appearance to Lady Louisa Egerton's.

Before Mrs. Graham took leave, however, she inquired most affectionately for Dawson, "faithful old Dawson," as she called her, and on hearing, to her surprise, that she was at that moment in Mrs. Clifton's service, she expressed her great delight at so devoted a servant being still with the children whom she had so carefully brought up, and begged to be allowed to see her.

Alice went herself to fetch Dawson, who gladly heard that Mrs. Graham was in the drawing-room, and wished to see her, for Mrs. Graham's courteous, winning manners had always made her a favourite with Dawson, as with most other people.

She followed Alice to the drawing-room, and, standing

at the open door, curtseyed low. But Mrs. Graham came forward, and holding out her hand, shook hands warmly with the old servant, and told her how glad she was to find her still with her young ladies.

"Not more glad than I am to be here, ma'am," replied Dawson; "and how do you find them looking, ma'am?"

"As well, Dawson, as even their papa could wish to see them, as I shall have the pleasure of writing to tell him. It is not so very long since I saw them last, but at their age, even a short time makes a great change, and they are very much grown. Edith is more like her papa than ever, and Alice is still the image of her dear mamma."

"Yes, ma'am," said Dawson, "that's what I say. Miss Alice is the living picture of what my dear mistress was. She was always like her, even when she was a baby, but now that she's growing up, she gets more like her every day, and by the time she gets to be a grown young lady, I don't think there will be any difference."

"Well," said Mrs. Graham, "there will be nothing to regret in that, Dawson, will there?"

"No, indeed, ma'am," said Dawson; "there weren't many like my mistress, ma'am, as you know."

And then she asked respectfully, "And have you been quite well, ma'am, out in foreign parts, and the Major?"

"I have been very well," replied Mrs. Graham, "but the Major has been ill, and we have had to return home in consequence. I hope your master's health will not suffer so much where he is. Major Graham had a letter from him

only yesterday, which has followed us home, for he did not know of our having left for England. I have brought the letter with me," she added, turning again to Edith, "for I thought you would like to see it. And now I really must go, only not until Mrs. Clifton has kindly fixed a day for you to spend with me,—you must come early, and spend the whole day. I shall ask no one to meet you, that we may be able to talk over old times together without interruption; besides, I want you to become better acquainted with my niece, Georgina, who is staying with me."

The day after to-morrow was decided on. Mrs. Graham and Lady Georgina Ashton took leave, the former apologizing for so long a visit. Dawson returned to her sewing in the housekeeper's room, and Mrs. Clifton and the girls to their occupations in the study.

Mrs. Clifton left them soon afterwards, and then Edith and Alice talked together, while Dora went on with her work at the other end of the table, and no doubt heard all they were saying.

It gave Edith great satisfaction to know that she did so, for Alice talked in her usual unreserved way, of the pleasure it had given them to see Mrs. Graham again, and expressed, in unqualified terms, her admiration of Lady Georgina Ashton's personal appearance and elegant manners, and the remarks which Edith felt she could not herself have made, without Dora's supposing that they were made expressly that she might hear them, seemed from Alice perfectly natural and spontaneous.

Mrs. Clifton spoke again to the girls that evening about Mrs. Graham, after thinking over the matter, and arriving at the conclusion that her name was *not* one of those which Colonel Cornwall had mentioned amongst the friends with whom he wished his children freely to associate, whenever Mrs. Clifton could allow them to do so without interfering with their studies, or with the arrangements she had formed for them.

Edith however succeeded in fully convincing her that Mrs. Graham was a very old friend, and if further proof had been wanting, Dawson's testimony to Mrs. Graham's former intimacy with her mistress, and the letter which Edith gave Mrs. Clifton to read from her father to Major Graham, were quite sufficient to supply it, and to convince Mrs. Clifton that this friendship was one of those which were fully approved of by Colonel Cornwall. He certainly had not mentioned her name, but that was of course accounted for by Major and Mrs. Graham's having gone abroad at the same time that he had, and therefore he did not think that an opportunity would occur for their seeing anything of his children.

Alice's mind however was not satisfied; in spite of the great pleasure it had given her to see Mrs. Graham again, she could not feel as if she and Edith had been perfectly open and honest with Mrs. Clifton. It was true she had not been called upon to say anything herself, but, by her own silence, she had given consent to all that Edith had said, and now she felt that they had led Mrs. Clifton to a conclusion which

Alice's conscience told her was not correct. Mrs. Clifton firmly believed that Mrs. Graham was an intimate friend of their parents, and that they had been allowed to be with her whenever they liked. But was this the exact truth? Alice felt that it was not.

She remembered times when she had felt quite sure, though she had not heard them say so in so many words, that her parents had tried to check the intimacy with Mrs. Graham, and to-night, when the girls were alone in their room, she unburdened her conscience to her sister, in no way accusing Edith, but taking to herself a full portion of the blame, in which indeed she felt as if she were an equal sharer.

"It was very pleasant to see Mrs. Graham again," she remarked, by way of beginning the conversation.

"Yes, very," replied Edith, "I am very glad she has taken a house in London, and that we shall see a great deal of her, and that nice-looking niece of hers. You know, Alice, that is the niece Mrs. Graham was always wishing so much that we could know. She used to say she was sure that she and I should be great friends, if once we knew each other well."

"Yes," said Alice, "I remember. She is sister to that young Lord Ashton who came down for the review, and dined with us. I recollect papa did not like him much, at least he said he hoped he would not come again. I wonder whether he would like Lady Georgina?" And then she added, after a moment's hesitation, and evidently by an effort,

"Do you think, Edith, we have done quite right in letting Mrs. Clifton think we were so very intimate with Mrs. Graham? I mean, do you really think she was such a great friend of papa's, and of dear mamma's; as Mrs. Clifton thinks she was?"

"What *do* you mean?" replied Edith, impatiently, "don't you know as well as I do how intimate we were with Mrs. Graham, especially of late, when mamma was so ill, did not she come every day to see us, and used we not to go out with her constantly? I never heard any one talk such nonsense as you do sometimes, Alice, especially lately. You are always taking some absurd idea or other into your head."

Poor Alice's equanimity was not a little disturbed by these hasty words, but she never could answer her sister in the same impatient manner in which Edith often spoke to her; from earliest infancy, Alice's spirit had been so accustomed to yield to Edith's stronger will, that it was not often she could find any power to resist it, or that she could exhibit towards Edith any such indignant feelings, as had been easily aroused when Dora Milford had been the aggressor. So that, although feeling considerably vexed by the angry contemptuous manner in which Edith received her first remark, it was in a very gentle tone of voice that Alice ventured upon a second, and a similar one.

"Yes," she said. "Of course I know that we were very intimate with Mrs. Graham, but I don't think, Edith, that papa or mamma liked our being so, and I am sure, almost



sure at least, that if he were here now, he would rather we did not see too much of them."

"How absurd you are, Alice!" interrupted Edith, "when Mrs. Graham gave us that letter to read only to-day. You read it as well as I, and could see for yourself how affectionately papa writes to Major Graham, and how he says he often wishes that he could enjoy a renewal of their former pleasant intercourse. Those are his very words. And I suppose papa knows his own opinions better than you do!"

"Yes, but," said Alice, "that is not quite the same thing as saying that he would like us to renew our intercourse with Mrs. Graham. I know papa likes Major Graham very much, and was always glad to be with him, but indeed, Edith, you surely must remember that he used to keep us away from Mrs. Graham. I hope it is not wrong to say so, but I think he, and dear mamma too, used to think she was very gay and worldly, too gay, and that perhaps she might make us vain and worldly too, don't you?"

"No, indeed," replied Edith, angrily, "I don't think any such thing, nor remember any such thing, all I think is that you are very uncharitable, and I am sure papa would say so too, and be shocked to hear you talking like that, and pronouncing judgment upon people who are a great deal older and wiser than we are ourselves."

Alice made no reply for several minutes. She seemed busily engaged in thinking, and Edith thought she had completely succeeded in silencing all her absurd scruples, but she was mistaken, for Alice resumed the subject by saying,

‘ Edith, I don’t think it will be wrong to tell you something I heard once. I have never told you, or any one, because I know it was not meant for me to hear, but now I think I ought to tell you, if you will only let me speak.’

Edith’s curiosity was aroused, and she listened attentively while Alice continued, “ It was when mamma was very ill, when she did not get up at all. We had been out with Mrs. Graham, I remember quite well we had gone to town with her in the carriage, and had been away nearly all day. When we came back, there was a letter for you from Aunt Catharine, and you remained down stairs to read it, but I went up to mamma’s room. The door was wide open, and as I came along the passage, I heard mamma say something, and then papa said, ‘ No, I don’t like it either, and I think we have allowed it too much, but I have been afraid of wounding Graham’s feelings, and it will soon be put a stop to now,—we are going away, and so are they, otherwise it certainly could not go on, though it is a temptation to let the poor children have a little amusement sometimes, and now you are so ill, and I am so much engaged, it is very seldom they have any one to go anywhere with, but, as you say, we must not allow anything which would injure their best interests.’

“ I think, as far as I can remember, those were papa’s words, for when I heard him talking so gravely, I stopped at the door for a moment, only a moment, and then I remembered it was not said for me to hear, and I went in, and mamma asked me a great many questions about where

we had been, and what we had seen, and I thought she seemed anxious. I knew quite well that she and papa had been talking about our being so much with Mrs. Graham. And oh, Edith, when I think of dear mamma I can't help remembering how anxious she always used to be about us, or feeling how wrong it would be to do anything which she would not like."

Edith heard all Alice said. She knew it was the truth, and was silent for a little while. Then she said, "Well, we can write and tell papa they have come home,—I suppose indeed Major Graham has already written,—and we shall see what papa says about our knowing them."

"But we can't hear from papa for months," replied Alice, "not till they have gone away from London, and meanwhile—"

"Meanwhile," interrupted Edith, "we must just let things take their chance. You would not have me tell Mrs. Graham, would you, that we think papa considers her very gay and worldly, and we are afraid, if we go to see her, she may do us some harm? I suppose, if papa himself was afraid of wounding their feelings, he would not exactly wish me to do so."

"No, certainly," said Alice, "only I don't think we ought to let Mrs. Clifton be mistaken. I think it's there we have been wrong, Edith. And if we were just to tell her everything,—I am sure I would not mind telling her myself,—I think it would be the right thing to do, and she is so kind and good, she would understand all about it, I

know, and would manage everything for us, without letting us do anything papa would not like, and yet without wounding anybody's feelings."

"Impossible!" was Edith's abrupt, but decided reply. "Of course we must not say a word to Mrs. Clifton. It couldn't be done after what I said to-day. I wonder now what she would think of me, telling her to-day that Mrs. Graham was one of our oldest friends, and that papa allowed us to be constantly with her, and then telling her to-morrow that papa did not like her at all, and would have been very glad to keep us away from her. No, we must just let things go on as they best may. Mrs. Graham won't poison us, I suppose, during the three months she may happen to stay in London. I can't say I feel at all afraid of her doing *me* any harm, whatever you may do. And as to saying anything to Mrs. Clifton different from what we have said, that would be too absurd. There's Dawson, too, you heard what Dawson said about Mrs. Graham, and how well mamma knew her."

"Oh, that's nothing," said Alice, "of course Dawson knows nothing about Mrs. Graham except that she is very good-natured and kind, and used often to come to our house. Even if papa and mamma had objected to it ever so much, they would not have said anything about it to Dawson."

"Well!" interrupted Edith, "I advise you, Alice, just to leave the matter to me, and not trouble your head with any more such nonsensical ideas, and whatever you do, don't

be so ridiculous as to say a word to Mrs. Clifton. As I say, things must take their chance."

Alice said no more. She never yet had found that it was of any use to argue a point with Edith. Nor did she find it so now. At the close of their long conversation, the sisters were both exactly in the same mind in which they had been when they first began to talk.

Edith's heart had been bent upon knowing Lady Georgina Ashton, and seeing a great deal of her and her aunt, ever since Mrs. Graham had first put the idea into her head, and it was bent upon it still. She enjoyed too the idea of showing Dora Milford that she had aristocratic friends as well as herself, and that all she had said about their not being allowed to go anywhere, or see anybody, was just "so much nonsense."

As for Alice's "absurd scruples," as she called them, Edith wilfully shut her eyes to the sober truth contained in them, and which, notwithstanding all her efforts to shut it out, would force itself before her mind. It had always been Alice's way to take all sort of silly fancies into her head, and lately she had been worse than ever. It would never do to indulge her in them. She herself was the elder of the two, and the cleverer also. Hers had always been the stronger mind. It was clearly her business to lead, and Alice's to follow.

Alice felt just as uncomfortable as she had done before. Nothing Edith had said had in the least sufficed to remove her doubts and fears. She longed more than ever to open

her heart to Mrs. Clifton, and tell her all that was weighing upon her conscience, and making her feel quite unhappy. If Alice could but have made up her mind bravely to do so, how much future trouble and sorrow might not have been avoided by thus simply pursuing the plain, straightforward path of duty. But Alice wanted moral courage. She was naturally timid, doubtful of herself, dependent upon others, afraid of giving offence or pain, and this disposition had been strengthened in her by habitual deference to her elder sister's stronger will. Alice wanted the moral power to do what she felt would be the right thing, in opposition to Edith's strongly-expressed wishes. She said no more therefore, but carried her dissatisfied mind and anxious heart with her to her pillow, and, as she lay awake, felt more painfully than she had ever done before, that it was a sad thing to be so far away from her dear father, and to have no longer her mother's watchful love and care to look to in every time of need.

## CHAPTER VIII.

"Yet why at others' wanings should'st thou fret?  
Then only might'st thou feel a just regret,  
Had'st *thou* withheld thy love or hid thy light  
In selfish forethought of neglect and slight.

\* \* \* \* \*  
And though thou notest from thy safe recess  
Old friends burn dim, like lamps in noisome air,  
Love them for what they are, nor love them less  
Because to thee they are not what they were."

COLERIDGE.

THINGS took their chance, as Edith had said they were to do.

The first day at Mrs. Graham's was a very quiet and a very pleasant one, to both the girls. Mrs. Graham took them with her to shop in Regent Street, and then they accompanied Lady Georgina Ashton and herself for a delightful drive in the Park, and returned to spend a most pleasant evening, listening to Major Graham's amusing account of all they had seen and done abroad, and on their journey.

Alice always enjoyed being with Major Graham. She knew her papa respected and liked him, and she had a sort of feeling of protection when she was in his company.

Once or twice during the evening, in forming plans for the three months which were to be spent in town, it struck Alice that Major Graham checked one or two projects which Mrs. Graham proposed, and in which she said she hoped to include the girls. "We must be careful not to form any plans for them which my friend Cornwall would not quite approve of," he remarked, rather decidedly, and then, turning to the girls, he added, "I am sure neither of my little friends could enjoy any pleasure without the feeling of their father's approbation, could they?"

Edith looked rather confused, but she answered, "No."

Alice's face grew crimson, and she said nothing.

Major Graham evidently remarked her confusion, and an expression of surprise passed over his countenance.

There was music in the evening. Lady Georgina played beautifully, so beautifully that Edith felt quite shy of showing her powers immediately afterwards. She played her favourite piece however, and took unusual trouble to play it well, and when she had finished she was not a little flattered by Mrs. Graham's saying, "Well, Georgina, I think this time you have found a rival: why, Edith, your improvement is something wonderful. I always told your papa you would be a first-rate performer, and I think, when he returns, that he will confess that I have proved right in my predictions. Now, Alice, you must let us hear you."

But Alice begged so earnestly that she might be excused, "she did not play well, not well enough to give any



one pleasure, only enough to take a part in a duet with Edith," and she seemed so much distressed at the idea of following Lady Georgina and Edith, that, although Mrs. Graham continued to press her, declaring, "she was as modest as ever, and did not know her own powers any better than she used to do in old days," Major Graham came to her rescue, saying, "she must not be made to play if she did not wish it," for which Alice felt infinitely grateful to him.

So Edith and Lady Georgina shared the piano between them, and it was difficult to tell which of the two displayed the greatest musical talent. They grew quite intimate over their music books, and at once formed plans for learning several pieces together. Lady Georgina declaring that she had never yet found any one whose style agreed so well with her own.

That evening was certainly a very pleasant one. And it was followed by many others equally so.

The girls went frequently to Mrs. Graham's, and neither of them seemed to be any longer troubled with doubts as to the right or the wrong of their intimacy. Edith had written to her father, as she had said she would, saying that Major and Mrs. Graham were in London, and were very kind to them, and having done so, she gave no more thought to the matter.

The answer to her letter could not arrive until after the Grahams had left London, or were on the point of leaving, in the meantime there was nothing to do but to enjoy their society to the utmost. And greatly did Edith enjoy it.

No companions could have suited her better than did the elegant, fascinating Mrs. Graham,—whose every sentence contained some hidden flattery, so well concealed and so delicately expressed, that while it fed Edith's vanity, it could not offend her pride,—and the charming Lady Georgina Ashton, with whom she soon formed a strong friendship.

Clever, highly-educated, dignified, and yet courteous, Lady Georgina was a very attractive young person, and when Edith found that, although cold to others, her manner to herself was friendly, she gave herself up entirely to the delights of her new friendship, and was happier than she had ever been before, all the more so, perhaps, from feeling, as she did, quite convinced that her new friends were a source of jealousy to Dora Milford, whose relations, the Egertons, had all left London as soon as the week of Christmas festivities was over, and had gone down to their country seat without taking Dora with them, as she had more than once hinted that they would be sure to do.

Alice's doubts about the intimacy with Mrs. Graham had been lulled to rest. They went there frequently, it was true, but they rarely met strangers, and their evenings were always spent very quietly.

That Mrs. Graham often gave large parties, when the rooms were crowded with gay people, the girls knew, both from herself and from Lady Georgina, whose relations generally seemed, on such occasions, to form the chief part of the guests, but Edith and Alice were never invited to them.

"Mrs. Graham thought, perhaps," Edith said, "that Mrs. Clifton would not allow them to go, or else she considered them too young to be asked to such large parties, though, as far as that went, she was six months older than Lady Georgina, but then, Lady Georgina was Mrs. Graham's niece, and was staying in the house."

Alice had her own ideas upon the subject, and felt sure that Major Graham's influence had more to do with the matter than anything else. She had fancied so from the first, but the idea had become fully confirmed in her mind one day when Major and Mrs. Graham were fixing an evening for the two girls to spend with them. Mrs. Graham had insisted upon its being the following Tuesday, but Major Graham had prevented this, and had made them decide on Thursday instead. Afterwards they learned from Lady Georgina that they had had quite a gay little party on Tuesday, her brother, Lord Ashton, and several of his acquaintances, and that her aunt had been vexed at their not being there, and had argued the point with Major Graham, saying that it was such a very small party, but that he had said it would not be right to ask such young girls out into society without their parents being there, especially when they knew how particular Colonel Cornwall was.

How thankful Alice felt to Major Graham for his interference! Not so Edith, however. She would have enjoyed meeting all Mrs. Graham's friends, and returning home to talk about them before Dora Milford.

Alice soon learned to care less about going to Mrs

Graham's than she had done at first, and before the first month was over, she had discovered that she was much happier at home, and that she had been much happier before the Grahams came to London than she had been since.

Edith and she had never been as intimate as sisters always ought to be, and often are. They had never been really friends to one another. But they had always been companions. Now they could scarcely be said to be even that, certainly not when they were at the Grahams. Edith cared only for Lady Georgina, and, for the sake of her new friend, her sister was utterly neglected. When she and Lady Georgina were together, they generally employed themselves in practising duets, sometimes in talking mysteriously about different little plans and projects which they had formed together, and which had not been confided to Alice.

Major and Mrs. Graham often went out together, leaving, as they said, "the girls to amuse each other," which doubtless they thought they would do, but it generally ended in all the amusement falling to the share of Lady Georgina and Edith, while Alice sat working, listening almost unconsciously to the sound of the piano, and feeling—she could not help feeling—that it was rather selfish of her two companions to play on together the whole evening without so much as addressing a word to her.

Edith never cared to play with Alice now. Before she knew Lady Georgina, she used to be very glad to have Alice at hand to take the bass in their different duets, and many

pleasant hours had the sisters spent together practising their pieces of music, but now Edith did not care for any occupation which was not shared by her new friend. It had always been Edith's way to throw herself heart and soul into whatever occupied her. Hitherto study had been her chief pursuit, and in this Alice had been able to take some share, for Edith had often been glad to avail herself of her good-natured little sister's help, and to allow her to copy different things for her, and assist her in her translations and exercises.

But now that Edith's one idea was her friendship with Lady Georgina, her sister was but little thought of. Alice resigned herself to her fate, but each day she felt more and more lonely, and she began to long eagerly for the expiration of the Christmas holidays, when little Minnie Carpenter would return to school. She hoped the visit to her aunt would have done her good, and that Minnie would come back more cheerful and contented. But in this Alice was disappointed.

The last day of the holidays came. Edith bemoaned its arrival in strong terms, for although the Grahams would be in London six weeks longer, she could not expect to see nearly so much of them now that studies were to begin again. Alice, however, was very glad to think she should no longer be left to such companionship as she could find in her sister and Lady Georgina, absorbed as they were in each other, or in Dora Milford, who had been, for some reason or

another, known only to herself, in a state of decided ill-humour ever since her relations left town.

She gladly welcomed the last day of the Christmas holidays.

The two Carters returned that same evening, "as silly," Edith declared, "as ever, and thinking as much of the children's parties, and the Christmas trees, they had enjoyed during the holidays, as though they had been six years old, instead of sixteen."

Anna Maitland and her little sister came the next morning, and in the afternoon Minnie Carpenter arrived. Oh, how glad Alice was to see again that little white face, and to hear again the quiet little voice which was to her so full of interest! And yet how sorry she was to see, as she saw at once, that the little face was as sad as ever, and that not one tone of cheerfulness had yet found its way into the soft, clear notes of the mournful little voice.

Minnie, however, seemed very glad to be with Alice once more, and no sooner was the greeting with Mrs. Clifton over than she was at Alice's side, and her face brightened when Alice offered to go with her to her own room to help her to take off her things. Minnie had a little room to herself inside Dawson's, whose charge she was,—the only little one Dawson had to take care of, for Lucy Maitland slept in her sister's room, and Anna took the principal charge of her herself, consequently Minnie was Dawson's especial favourite, and she looked upon her as almost as much her own as Edith and Alice.

Dawson was already in the room, unpacking and arranging Minnie's things, and she smiled when the two girls came in so lovingly together, and said "she was glad Miss Alice had got back her little sister."

"I'm sure I wish Minnie were really my sister," said Alice, warmly, the thought just passing through her mind, that if she had another sister, she should not feel so much as she did at seeing Edith giving the love and interest, which seemed to belong rightfully to her, to a comparative stranger.

"And I'm sure I wish *you* were my sister," said Minnie, as the two girls passed into the little room beyond, and Alice began to take off Minnie's warm wraps. "I have missed you so much since I have been away. I didn't like being there a bit. It was worse, much worse, than being at school."

"Why?" said Alice, "were they not kind to you? I thought your aunt seemed so good-natured the day she came here, and there were a great many children to be companions to you."

"Yes," replied Minnie, thoughtfully, "Aunt Ellen was very kind, and so was uncle, at least they meant to be, but they did not know anything about it, and the children were very good-natured, and wanted to make me happy, I dare say, but then they were all so happy. The boys came from school, and they were so noisy and merry, and there was nothing but laughing all day, and do you know, Alice, when they laughed so much, it only made me feel more

inclined to cry, and when we had great large parties, and lots of people and children came, I felt a great deal more lonely than I do here when I sit by myself, and draw in my little corner. And, somehow or other, all those parties and amusements, which Aunt Ellen used to say to uncle, were just what I wanted to make me less mopy,—Aunt Ellen was always calling me mopy,—only made me much more miserable. I thought very often, Alice, of what you used to tell me about heaven being nearer than we thought, and it seemed to me sometimes as if it were much nearer to me than those gay places were, and as if I were not in reality half so far away from my own papa and mamma as I was from the merry people, who laughed so loud, and made such a noise. Oh, Alice, I was so lonely down there amongst them all, and I am so glad to get back to you."

"And I am so glad to have you back," said Alice, stooping down to kiss the uplifted little face, "so very glad, Minnie, for I have been very lonely too."

"You lonely," said Minnie, "but why? You have had Edith with you, and you said in your letter that you had some old friends staying in London."

"Yes," said Alice, "but I don't think their coming has made me happier, indeed I know it has only made me unhappy. Edith has got a new friend now, Minnie, who is clever, and agreeable, and knows a great many things, and is much more fit to be a friend to Edith than I am, and it is natural, I suppose, that she should care more for her than she does for me."



"No, it is not natural," exclaimed Minnie, her usually gentle manner becoming quite excited as she saw the tears standing in Alice's eyes, "it is very unnatural, and very wicked. Edith ought to love you much better than she loves anybody else, except your papa, because you are her sister, whether you are clever or not. If I had a sister, I would love her dearly, with all my heart, just because she was my sister. I would not care whether she was pretty or ugly, or clever or stupid. She would be my own sister that God had given to me, and I would love her best of all. My papa and mamma were good and clever, there was nobody like them, but if they had not been, I would have loved them just the same because they were my own, my very own, and now that they are gone, I am miserable, and feel that I can never love anybody like them, because, though they may be very kind and very good, they are not my own, they all belong to somebody else. Oh! Alice, how can Edith be so wicked as to love any one so much as you! And you too that are so good."

"Oh no, Minnie," interrupted Alice, astonished at this sudden outbreak of feeling in the usually quiet Minnie, "Edith is not wicked, and I am not good."

"Yes, you are," said Minnie, "you are very good, you always do what is right yourself, and are good to others, and you deserve that they should be good to you too."

Alice's conscience smote her as Minnie said these words. Was it true that she always did what was right? If so, would it not have been right to open her mind to Mrs.

Clifton on the subject of their intimacy with Mrs. Graham !. And had she done so, how much of all her present trouble might never have come upon her ! She could not bear to hear from Minnie words of praise which she felt she did not deserve, and again she interrupted her, "Minnie dear, you must not talk like that, indeed you must not. I am not good—I am very wicked—I have done wrong things this holidays, and it is all my own fault that I have been unhappy."

"I don't believe it," said Minnie, very decidedly. "It is because you are good that you think you are bad. That is always the way. Good people think themselves very bad, and bad people think themselves very good. Look at Dora Milford and Edith. They hold up their heads so high, and speak so proudly, and I know they think there is nobody like them, but I don't think them good, either of them; Dora is cross and unkind, and laughs at everybody, and Edith does not love her own sister ! I'm sure she is not good, she is very wicked."

"Oh, Minnie," said Alice, "I wish I had not said a word to you about it, I will never tell you anything again if you talk like this. I know I ought not to have said a word to any one, only seeing you again made me so glad to have some one to speak to, but I never thought you would go on like this. You are quite changed, Minnie; you used scarcely ever to speak, and you have said more now than you used to say in a week."

"No, I am not changed," said Minnie, "only I have

missed you so much, and been so lonely there without any one to speak to, that it makes me talk to be with you again. And you SHALL speak to me, Alice, and tell me things, especially things that trouble you. If Edith does not love you, I will love you all the more. I will be your little sister, as Dawson says, and I won't let you be lonely and miserable. You have been good to me, and I will be good to you. I have no one to love of my very own, for God has taken them all away, my papa and mamma, and my little baby brother, that would have been my own, if God had let him live. But you shall be mine, my best, and I will try to make you happy, and you shall tell me everything, and teach me to be kind and good like you."

And the excited child threw her arms round Alice's neck, and burst into a passionate fit of weeping, while Alice herself could not restrain her tears.

And Dawson, who had been down stairs at her tea during the greater part of their conversation, returned to her own room at this moment, and thinking she heard the sound of crying in the dressing-room, opened the door, and found the girls both in tears.

"Miss Alice!" she exclaimed, "what is the matter?"

And seeing how still more overcome Minnie was, and how very pale she looked, she asked, "Is Miss Minnie ill, or has she had any fresh sorrow?" while Dawson wondered what fresh sorrow there could be for Minnie to have, since she had already lost all who were near and dear to her.

"No, Dawson," said Alice, "Minnie is very well, at least

she is going to be very well as soon as she has dried her tears, only we have both been very foolish. We were so glad to see each other again."

"That you must needs break your hearts about it," said Dawson; "that's one way certainly of showing your great happiness."

"No, Dawson," replied Alice, "we were not crying for that. It was Minnie that upset me, and made me cry, by crying herself. I don't know what for, except that she has found it lonely during the holidays, and is glad to come back, and—" Alice hesitated, and Dawson continued for her, "and you have been lonely too, and are glad to get her back. Poor darlings," she added, looking tenderly first at one, and then at the other, "you're young yet, both of you, but you are not too young to have your own griefs and cares to struggle with, or to learn that this world is not all summer, and joy, and sunshine. It's very hard for Miss Minnie to be left, as she is, at her age, without father, or mother, or sister, or brother, and it's very hard for you, too, Miss Alice, now that you have lost your own dear mamma, who was always glad to have you with her and listen to all you had to say,—it's very hard, I know, for you to see the only sister you've got turning away like from her own flesh and blood, and caring only for strangers. I know you feel it, my lamb, and I feel it too, and it's on my mind often to speak out to Miss Edith about it, for I can't bear to see her so taken up with these new friends of hers with their fine names, that she has

not got a word or a thought left for them who used to be the only ones she cared for."

"And why don't you speak to Edith, Dawson?" asked Minnie, "I wish you would, and tell her how wicked it is to neglect Alice, and make her cry,—will you?"

"I would indeed, Miss, and gladly," replied Dawson, "for I feel it just as much as you do, but, dear me, where was ever the use of speaking to Miss Edith? If you knew Miss Edith as well as I do, and have done ever since she was born, you'd know there wouldn't be much use in my speaking to her. Ten to one she would not so much as listen, and if she did, she would just say to herself that Dawson was an old goose, that could not know anything about right and wrong, and she would turn round and go on her way, without so much as thinking twice of anything I might say; no, it's not Miss Edith's way to listen to what others have to tell her, certainly not to what a servant like me might say."

"I don't like to hear you say that, Dawson," said Alice, "it seems as if you did not love Edith, and I am sure you do."

"Love her! Miss Alice, yes of course I do. Who should love her if I didn't, who have had the care of her ever since she was born? But love isn't blind—at least I believe some folks say it is,—but I have never found it so, and it isn't because I love Miss Edith that I'm going to be blind to her way of treating her old friends now she has found new ones. I don't speak to her, because, as I say, it

isn't of any use. Miss Edith never would listen to me, no, not when she was a little bit of a thing, and it isn't very likely she should begin now when she is a grown young lady, holding her head as high as if she were a queen. There's many a time I've tried to make her give up her way in the nursery, and no, she wouldn't, for all my talking to her, till perhaps your papa would come in and just make her, and then I could see, as plain as possible, she gave up just because she could not help it, but that her will was just as much set upon it as ever."

Alice was astonished. She had not thought it possible that Dawson could ever have spoken such disapproving words of one of her petted children. But this was a point on which Dawson felt strongly, and the opportunity having arisen for her to speak of it, she could not but do so strongly. It was quite a relief to her to speak in this way. For Dawson felt that she herself had come in for no small share of the neglect with which Edith had treated her old friends since she had made new ones. Often, since the intimacy with Lady Georgina, Edith had found fault with Dawson's "old-fashioned way of arranging her things," and on more than one occasion, when Dawson had taken particular pains with Edith's thick masses of hair, and had prided herself on having arranged them in the most perfect style, her feelings had been not a little wounded by finding, on her return from Mrs. Graham's, that all her carefully-arranged bands had been exchanged for plaits and bows, of a description which she had never seen before, and by hearing that the first thing

Lady Georgina Ashton had done on her friend's arrival, was to make her take all her hair down, and get it properly done by her own French maid, "dressing her up, indeed," as Dawson indignantly said, "like a Paris doll."

Dawson had never seen a Paris doll, but she knew that Lady Georgina's maid came from Paris, and adopted the term in consequence. This grievance however had soon ceased. Edith had taken off her bonnet one evening, on her return from Mrs. Graham's, in Mrs. Clifton's presence, and Mrs. Clifton perceiving the change in her hair, and inquiring into the cause, had desired that for the future Edith would allow her hair to remain as Dawson had arranged it for her, adding, in a graver tone than was at all usual to her when speaking either to Edith or Alice, that she hoped "they found some more profitable way of occupying themselves with their young friend than in arranging the hair."

Edith coloured crimson. The idea that Mrs. Clifton should think either her or her friend vain or trifling was not to be endured, and she entered with animation into an explanation of how they spent their time in reading, and practising, and how she was almost as busy at Mrs. Graham's as she was at school; "her hair was untidy one day, that was all, and Lady Georgina's maid had arranged it for her, and Dawson had been quite offended."

"Well," said Mrs. Clifton, "we must take care not to offend Dawson. I think she is a little inclined to be jealous of any one or anything which she fancies is likely to steal away Alice's or your heart from her."

Edith laughed, and said, "Yes, I know she is,"—and Mrs. Clifton continued, "Then you must be careful not to give her any occasion' to feel herself slighted or neglected. Dawson is a good, faithful creature. She has been devoted to both of you all your lives, and I am not surprised that she expects from you a considerable return of love and gratitude."

"I'm sure," said Alice, quickly, "I love Dawson, and would do anything in the world for her."

"I am sure you do, Alice, and I spoke rather to Edith than to you. I am afraid, Edith, you sometimes wound Dawson's feelings by the manner in which you turn a deaf ear to what she says, and appear to despise her little arrangements for you. Servants have feelings, Edith, quite as strong feelings as you have, though they may be exercised upon very different objects,—objects which to you perhaps seem too small and contemptible to be worthy of regard; but I consider that things are great or small, not so much as they are in themselves, but according to the feelings which they are capable of producing in our minds, or in the minds of others, and there may be as much sin and selfishness displayed in wounding a servant's feelings upon some trifling matter, as in causing pain to one in our own rank of life on some serious or important point."

Edith had nothing to say. She could not help feeling that Mrs. Clifton was right. Alice felt so too, and secretly hoped that Edith might benefit by the advice, for she had



often been grieved lately to see the careless manner in which Edith did not scruple to treat Dawson.

Mrs. Clifton had not touched upon the more serious matter of Edith's neglect of herself. But of that Mrs. Clifton knew nothing. She always saw the girls go out happily together, and return happily, and of course she supposed that they were sharers in all each other's occupations and pleasures. Of the lonely hours and half-hours which Alice spent when Major and Mrs. Graham were out, and Edith and Lady Georgina were absorbed in some occupation in which she was neither asked nor expected to take a part,—of the feeling of intense longing for her mother, and her mother's sympathy, which at such times would fill her heart,—of the silent tears which those feelings would often force into her eyes, and cause to fall unbidden upon the work over which her head was bent,—of all this Mrs. Clifton knew nothing. Alice never complained. If at times she felt inclined to do so, to say that she did not want to go to Mrs. Graham's, that no one cared for her there, that Edith and her friend treated her like a baby, and that she no longer felt any pleasure in being with them, she felt that to give way to these—the natural feelings of her heart, would be to involve Edith in trouble, to put an end to her pleasure in her friend's society, and to make the separation between her sister and herself only a great deal wider than it was now.

So Alice kept all she felt to herself. The discipline no doubt was good for her. It was one of the lessons given her to learn in the school of her heavenly Master. She had be-

come the willing disciple of that Great Teacher, and she knew that He required of all who followed Him, that they should take His yoke upon them, and learn of Him to be meek and lowly in heart. It was very good for her no doubt to be neglected and slighted. She was vain and weak, and her heart longed for support and sympathy. But Jesus knew that the earthly food she craved would only be as poison to her, and so He gave it not,—but gave instead, which was surely a far richer gift, a far higher honour,—the power and the grace to follow the example of lowliness which He had Himself set before her, when He “made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant.”

Still, Alice was often very lonely, and found it hard to be as submissive as she knew she ought to be, and it was with true joy and thankfulness that she welcomed Minnie back, and felt that she had some one to love her again.

And when the tea-bell rang to summon them to the dining-room, and put a stop to the conversation which she, and Minnie, and Dawson had been holding together, they all felt considerably relieved at having, each in their own way, given vent to the feelings of their hearts.

Alice and Minnie went down-stairs hand in hand, and looked so quietly happy as they came into the room together, that no suspicion could have crossed any one's mind of the tears which had attracted Dawson's attention half an hour before, while Dawson set to work to put away Minnie's things, her heart overflowing with love for the two dear children who had just left her. “God bless them both,” she

said to herself, "it does my heart good to see them turning to each other for comfort and sympathy in their little sorrows and troubles. It's just the promise being fulfilled that 'those that water others, shall be watered themselves.' There was my dear lady, she gave herself up, heart and soul, to the tending and comforting of young Mrs. Carpenter when she was so ill, and was as devoted to that little baby as though it had been her own. And now there's that very baby come to be her own child's comfort, and to fill up an empty place in her heart. 'Tis the good she did to others coming back upon herself. I know it's the Lord's promise not to forget aught of what He sees His children do out of love to Him. There's a text that tells us even the 'cup of cold water given in His name is sure to meet with its reward,' and I believe it. Many and many is the cup of water my good mistress gave to them that needed it, and there is not one of them forgotten, no, not one. It's like dew fallen on the ground,—it seems hidden, but it isn't lost, it will all return again in blessing,—blessing, I dare say, on these very children of hers, who were her chief thought and prayer."

## CHAPTER IX.

"How are ye gone, whom most my soul held dear!  
Scarce had I loved you, ere I mourn'd you lost!  
Say, is this hollow eye—this heartless pain,  
Fated to rove through Life's wide cheerless plain,  
Nor father, mother, brother meets its ken,—  
My woes, my joys unshared! Ah! long ere then,  
On me thy icy dart, stern Death, be proved;  
Better to die than live and not be loved!"

COLERIDGE.

THREE months of busy school-life passed away, and brought no great change to any one amongst Mrs. Clifton's little party. Lessons were learnt, and exercises prepared, and everything went on its usual steady course.

Major and Mrs. Graham and Lady Georgina Ashton still remained in town, and Edith and Alice Cornwall were their occasional guests, but now that their studies had regularly recommenced, they were not able to be nearly as much with their friends as they had been during the Christmas holidays, consequently Alice's life had of late been much more happy and Edith's had been less so.

The Grahams talked of leaving town after Easter, as Major Graham's health required change into the country

and Edith was grieving at the prospect of soon being obliged to part with her new and already dear friend, Lady Georgina Ashton. It was true that she had received a pressing invitation, both from Lady Georgina herself and from Lady Georgina's father, to spend the whole of the Midsummer vacation with them at their place in Scotland, and most delightful would the anticipation of such a pleasure have been to Edith, quite sufficient to have reconciled her to the approaching parting, but she knew that there was no hope of her being able to accept it.

Colonel Cornewall had long since made arrangements for both the girls to spend the Midsummer holidays with some relations of their mother's in Devonshire, and even if this had not been the case, Edith knew that he would not consent to her being separated from Alice, and going by herself, on a visit to a family of whom he knew nothing, and the only specimen of which he had ever seen, namely, Lady Georgina's young brother, was not of a character at all likely to prepossess him in favour of the rest of the family. Edith was aware that it would be useless even to ask him, so she told her friend that they had an engagement in Devonshire which they could not break, and deplored in secret the misery of not being her own mistress, longing more than ever for the day to come when she should no longer be considered a child, but be allowed to take her own way, and follow her own wishes. Distant as this day now seemed, Edith believed that at some future time she should enter upon it, not having yet learned that no such day can ever

come to any being on this earth, inasmuch as even over those who seem to possess the most liberty, and to have unlimited sway over this world's riches and privileges, there reigneth one great Governor, who ruleth all their circumstances, not according to their wishes, but according to His own will—even that almighty God of Providence, who ruleth supreme in the kingdom of men,—in whose eyes all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing, but who doeth according to His will among the inhabitants of the earth, as well as in the army of heaven, none being able to stay His hand, or to say unto Him, "What doest Thou?" But no thought of this great Ruler was in Edith's heart, as she dreamed fondly of a day of liberty to come, and in this manner strove to reconcile her mind to the restraint to which she was unwillingly obliged to submit at present.

The Easter holidays were to begin during the following week, and there would be a ten days' cessation of studies; although none of the girls would leave Mrs. Clifton's, except Anna and Lucy Maitland, who lived near London.

Two days before the holidays began, Mrs. Clifton received a letter, which seemed to cause her much anxiety and thought, for she told the girls that she could not attend to their studies that day, and spent the greater part of it in her own room writing letters. The next morning at breakfast they learned, to their surprise, that Mrs. Clifton was going to leave them for a few days, called into the country by the dangerous illness of her only brother.

"Her sister-in-law," she said, "would come to stay in

the house during her absence, and she could leave more easily as there would be no study going on, and therefore no masters coming. In case of any illness occurring, which she trusted was not likely, Dawson had promised that she should be summoned immediately.

Mrs. Clifton looked so very sad and grave that the girls all felt that the summons, which had thus hurried her from home, must be a very urgent one, and when in a few kind words she asked them all to promise her, that, so far as it depended upon them, everything should go on during her absence just as they knew she would wish it to do, they all gave the required promise readily and affectionately.

"I knew I could depend on you," said Mrs. Clifton, kindly, "and I have told my sister so, and that I think I can promise that she will have no trouble in the regulation of my little family; if it had been otherwise, I might have hesitated in leaving you all to her care, she is so very mild and gentle, but, as I say, I know I can depend on you. My sister cannot be here until this afternoon. I must leave you immediately, or I could not reach my brother's this evening, but you will none of you want occupation."

Mrs. Clifton went to put on her travelling things, and Dawson went to assist her, and receive her last instructions. The cab drove to the door, and the girls assembled in the hall to wish her good-bye once more. They were all sorry to see her go, for Mrs. Clifton held a place, more or less warm, in each of their young hearts, but Alice felt so sorry, so very sorry, she could not bear to see her go, and although

generally so shy, even in showing her feelings of love, by some impulse which she could not control, after they had all said good-bye, and Mrs. Clifton had passed on, she could not help letting go Minnie's hand, which she held in hers, and following Mrs. Clifton into the outer passage, she threw her arms around her neck, and said, "I am so sorry you are going away, I will do all I can to please you while you are gone."

Mrs. Clifton stopped a minute to kiss her tenderly, and the tears filled her own eyes, as she said, "I know you will, my darling child. God bless you, and take care of you. You are very dear to me, Alice, for your own sake, as well as for your mother's, whom I loved so dearly, and whom you are so like, that it often seems to me the old time must have come again, when Alice Vernon was my chief thought and care."

Mrs. Clifton was gone, and Alice returned to her young companions, but when they all went into the school-room, and each one found some occupation for herself, Alice felt as if she could not settle to anything, and she proposed to Minnie that they should go and walk in the garden.

Minnie, always glad to be Alice's companion, readily assented, and the two girls went into the garden, and walked together up and down the long gravel walk, lined on either side with tall evergreen oaks. It was Alice's favourite place of resort, when, as was often the case with her, she wished to be alone, and to have quiet time for thought, and every Sunday afternoon she used to take her prayer book



and go there to learn the Collect, and Epistle, and Gospel for the day, which all the girls were in the habit of repeating to Mrs. Clifton after tea, and which generally formed the subject for their Sunday evening's class.

Many of the girls, most of them indeed, learnt the allotted portion as a task, getting it by heart when they could, generally in the school-room after dinner. Not so Alice. She liked to be alone when she was learning such things as these, and the Collects had become so familiar and so dear to her, that almost unconsciously their words of earnest devotion would suggest themselves to her mind in her own daily prayers, and enable her to express with greater ease to her Heavenly Father the desires which filled her heart.

The Evergreen Walk, as it was called, was gefferally Alice's hiding-place, and a very tempting one it was to a lover of quiet, for it was shut out even from the sight of the house, running at the end of the long garden, and the only sounds that could be heard from it were the cawings from a neighbouring rookery, the denizens of which flew aloft from tree to tree, flapping their dark wings, and calling to each other in their wild notes; but Alice, far from finding these companions a disturbance, enjoyed their companionship, which added to the rurality of the scene, and helped to make her forget that she was within a short distance of the noisy, bustling, ever-stirring town, and that on the other side of the house, even, the carriages and cabs were rolling on with their unceasing din, the hum of which could not, however, be heard from this distance.

To this part of the garden Minnie and Alice now took their way, and with their arms passed lovingly around each other, they walked up and down.

"I like this walk so much," said Alice, "it's such a sweet, quiet place, one forgets when one is here all that is going on elsewhere."

"You often come here on Sundays, don't you?" asked Minnie.

"Yes," replied Alice, "it is so much easier to learn here than in the house, at least so much easier to learn the things we have to learn on Sundays,—I can't give my mind to them when the girls are talking and laughing."

"No," said Minnie, "no more can I, that's why I generally take my book up-stairs and sit with Dawson. She helps me, too, and makes it easy by explaining the hard parts. I think, Alice, Dawson is very good, don't you?"

"Yes," said Alice, "I am sure she is."

"Did she teach you to be good too?" asked Minnie, while the wish arose in her heart, that if Dawson had taught Alice to be what she was, she wished very much she would teach her also, for she would give a great deal to be like Alice.

"You always call me good, Minnie," said Alice, "I wish you wouldn't do so. I can't bear to hear you say so, because it only shows me that you don't know me a bit, and sometimes it makes me feel afraid that I must be a hypocrite, and appear better than I really am, for I know in

my heart that I am not at all good, whatever I may seem to you."

"Well," said Minnie, "I don't know what you are in your heart, because you know I can't see your heart, but I can see what you do, and it makes me think you must be good—and, oh! I should like so much to be like you. I know it makes you unhappy to see Edith going on as she does about that Lady Georgina of hers, and treating you just as if she did not care about you a bit, but yet you never get in a rage with her, and instead of leaving her to herself and her fine new friend, I think you only try more to please her than you used to do before. Now, I should not like to do that. I *couldn't* do it if I were to try. If my sister did not care about me, then I wouldn't care about her, and I would never talk to her, or trouble myself about her, but I would just let her go her own way, and I would go mine, and show her that, if I was nothing to her, she was nothing to me. And then, Alice, I know, too, you don't like being so far away from your papa, and I am sure you are often very unhappy about your mamma's being gone away from you for ever, and yet you don't cry and fret, but try to be cheerful and happy yourself, and make other people happy too. But I can't be like that. I am unhappy because my papa and mamma are gone from me, and I could not be anything else, if I were to try ever so hard. And when I see other people happy, do you know, Alice,—it's very wicked I dare say, but I can't help it,—it makes me dislike them. When Aunt Julia and my cousins used to be

so merry, and make such a fuss about their parties, and all the pleasure they had, it always made me feel cross with them and bad in my heart. I know, Alice, I'm very wicked, I'm not a bit like you, and sometimes when I am with Dawson, and she talks so good, I wonder if it was being with her when you were a little child that taught you to be what you are, only I suppose it could not be, because Edith was there, and I don't think Edith is good."

"Minnie, you must not say that," said Alice,—and this time she spoke so decidedly that Minnie looked up in surprise,—“I will not let you speak like that of Edith. It is very wicked of you, and it makes me feel wicked too. Even if Edith were not good we have no right to say so. Don't you know what we learned in the Epistle last Sunday about not judging others? I won't talk to you, Minnie, if you will say such wrong things."

"Well, then," said Minnie, "we won't say any more about Edith, or any one. We'll only speak about ourselves, Alice, about you and about me. And what I want to say is, that I wish I were like you. I wish it so very much. For oh, Alice, I do feel so miserable. And I think if I were like you, perhaps I might be happier."

And Minnie's voice was choked by the sobs which came thick and fast as she uttered these last words. Alice's heart beat quickly. She scarcely knew what to say, and yet she felt that she must do something to comfort this desolate little heart. So young and ignorant as she herself was, how could she teach or comfort others? She wished that Minnie could

have been led to open her mind to Mrs. Clifton, or Dawson, or any one who was wise and good, and able to guide her aright, but Minnie had not done so.

It was to Alice that she had unlocked the secrets of her heart, and therefore perhaps it must be Alice whom God intended to be of use to her. She resolved to try, and whilst, at the same moment, her heart went up in secret prayer to that Heavenly Father who always seemed to Alice to be very near to help and teach in the hour of need, she said, "Let us sit down here, Minnie dear, and have a talk. I would do anything in the world to be of any use or comfort to you, only I don't well know what to do. If you would only speak to Mrs. Clifton, or even to Dawson"—

"But I could never do that," interrupted Minnie, "no, never, I can't speak to any one. I never have been able to tell my thoughts to any one since my own papa and mamma died. But I feel that I could talk to you, Alice,—only to you. And you must tell me, please, how to learn to be like you, and what I must do to be less unhappy. If I were good, Alice, I should like to die. Don't look so shocked, Alice. It's quite true. If I were good I should like to die more than anything else you could give me,—to die, and go to my papa and mamma and my little brother, who are all in heaven. But I'm not good, and if I died, I should not go where they are, so I don't wish to die, only it's very dreadful to think of always living by myself, without anybody really to love me, or for me really to love,—no father,

no mother, no brothers, and no sisters. It's so very, very lonely."

"Yes," said Alice, "it must be *very, very* sad. But, Minnie dear, I don't think you would feel it so much, I'm sure indeed you wouldn't, if—" Alice hesitated, she feared lest Minnie should not understand her—"if you loved God, and if you could feel sure that God loves you. He does love you, Minnie, a great deal more than any earthly father could ever have loved you, only you don't know it."

"No," said Minnie, "I don't. If God loved me so much, do you think He would have taken away all I had in the world, and left me here alone?"

"Yes," said Alice, "I believe it was just because He loved you that He did it."

"Oh, Alice!" exclaimed Minnie, "why? If I loved any one, I would not like to make them unhappy. I would give them all the good things I could think of. I should never think anything too good for them to have."

"Yes," said Alice, "and then they would love the things you gave them so much, that they would be quite taken up with them, and would never think about *you* at all; and if you were gone away from them, they would be quite satisfied to stay where they were, and never to see you again, or to care about going to the place where you lived, although you had invited them there, and had prepared everything ready to receive them, and were always expecting them, and asking them to come, and then how would you like that, Minnie?"

"I should not like it at all," said Minnie.

"And God does not like it either, Minnie. And He will not allow it. And that is why He takes away our good things, from His very love to us. Listen, Minnie, for a moment, and perhaps I can make you understand better what I mean,—it's so hard for me to tell you, because you know I can't explain things properly as Mrs. Clifton could if you would only speak to her,—I know quite well what I mean, only I can't explain."

"Yes," said Minnie, "you can. I understand you quite well, and I like to hear you talk,—go on."

"Well, then," replied Alice, "do you recollect, Minnie, that little child you and I saw the other afternoon at the Polytechnic?"

"Do you mean the little boy who would not leave the pictures he was looking at when his father called him?" asked Minnie.

"Yes," replied Alice, "don't you remember what trouble his father had to make him leave those pictures, although it was to show him something so much more beautiful, that after he had once been persuaded to come into the other room, nothing would have induced him to go back, and he thought no more of the things he had left. I think, Minnie, it is often very like that with us. God takes us away from the things we are clinging to, because He sees that if He did not tear us from them, we should never leave them, even though all the time He was promising to lead us into a better place, and to give us much more beautiful things."

Alice stopped speaking. Minnie was silent, but she fixed her dark eyes intently upon Alice's face, and seemed to be awaiting so eagerly what she might say next, that Alice went on,—

“Do you know, Minnie, what I once heard my own dear papa say? I think I will tell you, because you know what it is to love very much, and to lose those you love. It was when our mamma died. Oh, Minnie, you don't know what a darling mother she was, for you can't remember her. She was perfect, at least she seemed perfect to us, and papa loved her, oh, so much. Edith and I used often to say when she was dying that we did not think papa could live without her, and that if she died, we thought he would die too. And one day, when papa was talking to me about mamma, I told him what Edith and I had said. And oh, Minnie, I wish you could have seen the heavenly look that came into his face; his eyes were full of tears, but he had a beautiful smile on his face, and he put his hand on my head, and said, ‘God grant, Alice, that before you know what such grief is, you may have learnt enough of the love of Jesus to feel that the Christian's heart can never be left quite desolate.’

“I remember his very words. He said them in such an earnest voice, they seemed to go quite deep down in my heart, and have remained there ever since. Perhaps, Minnie, if you loved Jesus more,—perhaps,” she added, after a little hesitation,—“if you were one of God's own children, you would not be so lonely as you are.”

“Perhaps not,” said Minnie, very quietly.



And after this, neither of the girls said any more. They sat quite silently on the garden bench for some little time, until the bell rang for tea, and then they walked quietly back to the house.

Minnie passed Alice, and ran quickly up the stairs, but just as she had reached the landing, she turned round, and running back, threw her arms round Alice's neck, and gave her a long, earnest kiss.

Then going into her own room, she shut and locked the door, and throwing herself upon her knees by her bed-side, she hid her face in her hands, and exclaimed, "O God, let me be Thy child. I am so lonely now, O God, so *very, very* lonely, let me be Thy child."

It was the first time in her life that Minnie Carpenter had ever prayed. She had knelt in that very place every day, for several years. Night and morning had the words of prayer passed her lips, ever since she had been old enough to utter them,—the holy words of prayer which her mother had taught her in her infancy, and which she had never failed to repeat. But they had been to her words without meaning. Until this evening Minnie had never known what it was really to pray. Her heart had been full of deep, earnest, unsatisfied longings, but never until now had they formed themselves into a prayer. And now she was scarcely aware that she was praying. All she felt was that she wanted something which she had not got—something which only God could give her, and which she must ask Him for.

Minnie had scarcely been five minutes in her room before

some one tapped at the door, and hastily rising from her knees, she admitted Dawson.

"Tea is ready, Miss Minnie," she said, "they are asking where you are,—is anything the matter, my dear?" she asked kindly, for she noticed Minnie's flushed look.

"No, Dawson, nothing," Minnie answered, and then, encouraged by the look of tenderness which the faithful Dawson cast upon the little orphan child, she summoned up all her courage, and said, her large eyes fixed full on Dawson's face,—“Only, Dawson, I want to be like Alice, I want to be one of God's own children.”

"Then God will make you to be one, my dear," said Dawson, decidedly, "for He that gives the wish can do the work. You are your mother's only child, Miss Minnie, the child of her hopes and prayers, and so it doesn't surprise me to see you turning your face towards the home she has gone to, and asking them as know the road, and are on their way there themselves, to help you to go along with them. God bless you, my dear. God bless you, and uphold your footsteps in the right way. It's a narrow way, Miss Minnie, but it's plain enough for them as are really striving to walk in it, and though it's up-hill almost always, and sometimes steep enough, it isn't so hard to get on as you might think, because you see, Miss Minnie, the Saviour is always at hand to help His people over the rough places."

Minnie went down to tea, and spent the evening in her usual way, working quietly in her accustomed place, scarcely speaking to any one, or seeming to take any notice of what

was going on around her. But though she appeared to others to be just the same as ever, she did not seem so to herself. A change had come over her. It appeared to her as if all her life she had been wanting something, and wishing to ask for it, and had never yet had courage to do so. But that now she had found out what she wanted, had asked for it, and would be sure to receive it.

This was the feeling in little Minnie's mind all the evening, and when she knelt at her bed-side that night, it was to renew with still deeper earnestness the prayer which she had that day offered up for the first time in her life,—  
“O God, make me Thy child.”

## CHAPTER X.

"A maiden meek, with solemn, steadfast eyes,  
Full of eternal constancy and faith,  
And smiling lips, through whose soft portal sighs  
Truth's holy voice, with every balmy breath;  
So journeys she along life's crowded way,  
Keeping her soul's sweet counsel from all sight;  
Nor pomp, nor vanity lead her astray,  
Nor aught that men call dazzling, fair, or bright."

BUTLER.

"A NOTE for you, ma'am, and one for Miss Cornewall," and the servant handed two notes to Miss Jane Clifton, as she sat with the girls in the study two days after her sister's departure.

Edith's note was given to her. She read it eagerly, and then returned it to Miss Clifton, saying, "It is an invitation for me and Alice for next Wednesday. I suppose I may write and accept it?"

Edith expected a ready assent, and was surprised, and not a little annoyed, to see that Miss Clifton hesitated before she returned any answer. When she did reply, it was not in a very satisfactory manner.

"I have a note from Mrs. Graham myself," she said. "It seems that she is going to have a party. I don't know

whether my sister would wish you and Alice to accept this invitation or not. But it is not until Wednesday, so there will be plenty of time to learn her wishes on the matter. We will write and ask her."

Edith was greatly annoyed. If Mrs. Clifton were written to on the subject, she felt almost certain that her answer would be in the negative, for she was fully aware of the very decided views which Colonel Cornwall held on this point, and unfortunately Mrs. Graham had made no secret in her note of her party being a large one, a "farewell party," she called it, "to their friends before they left town."

Mrs. Graham had so many friends, that this "farewell party" could not be otherwise than a large one. There was not the smallest chance of Alice and herself being allowed to go to it alone, and without their father's permission.

"What a nuisance it is that Mrs. Graham should have written to Miss Clifton," Edith exclaimed to Alice, as soon as the sisters had gone to their room to dress for dinner; "if she had only just asked us to go there on Wednesday evening, and not said anything about its being a farewell party to all her friends, we should have gone without any fuss being made about it. But if Mrs. Clifton is written to, I know she'll refuse."

"But, Edith," said Alice, "surely it's only right."

"Oh, don't begin about right again," exclaimed Edith, petulantly. "I declare, Alice, there's no use in talking to you now. One can't say a word to you without your beginning at once about what is right and what isn't. I believe

you think you're the only person in the world who knows right from wrong."

"Oh, Edith," replied Alice, "how *can* you talk like that?"

"Because it's true," interrupted Edith, sharply; "you've grown so conceited lately there's no bearing you. Lady Georgina said the other day that, although you had such a demure look, and always seemed so quiet and humble, she did not know any one who had a better opinion of herself than you had, or who could be more obstinate when she chose."

"It's very unkind of Lady Georgina to set you against me, Edith," replied Alice, warmly, "and it's very wicked too,—Dawson says so."

"Dawson!" exclaimed Edith, scornfully. "So you make a confidante of your maid-servant, do you, Alice? well, I would advise you to choose different friends for the future!"

"Dawson is not our maid-servant," replied Alice, angrily,—for Edith had provoked her, until she had lost command of her temper,—"Dawson is our own dear old nurse. And I'm sure I'd rather make a friend of a faithful old nurse like Dawson, than of all the fine Lady Georginas in the world."

"Dear me!" said Edith, while her lip was curled yet more scornfully than before, and she gave the short, sharp laugh which always tried poor Alice's temper more than any amount of angry words could do,—"dear me! what a sweet temper you're in. I thought you were much too good ever

to lose your temper. The best thing you can do is to recover it, for there's the dinner-bell, and I must be going."

Edith walked quietly away. Alice threw herself into a chair, and burst out crying. She felt miserable,—she longed to see her papa, to be at home again,—school had become intolerable,—Edith was more unkind than ever,—she had never been so unhappy in all her life.

The second bell rang, and Edith was sent to call Alice to dinner.

"You can't come down," she said, "you've put yourself into a nice state going into such a passion, and crying like that, all for nothing. You'd better dry your eyes and wash your face, or you certainly won't be able to go to Madame's class this afternoon. I shall tell Miss Clifton you're not well enough to come down to dinner."

And Edith hastened to the dining-room, while Alice threw herself upon her bed, and sobbed.

For some little time she lay there, looking upon herself as the most unhappy of girls, and upon Edith as the unkindest and most selfish of sisters.

And then different thoughts came into her mind.

The storm of passion passed away, and as it did so, a still, small voice seemed to ask the question, what it was that had made her so unhappy? And another voice within her answered, that it was not Edith's unkindness,—for Edith had often been much more unkind, and much more unjust, and Alice had scarcely seemed to feel it,—nor was it that Alice's position was really such a very unhappy one,

for only the day before she had been counting up her mercies, and had come to the conclusion that if she had some little trials to bear, she had, at the same time, so many and such rich blessings to counterbalance them, that she should be most ungrateful not to be happy and thankful. No, Alice saw that it was neither Edith's unkindness nor her own circumstances which made her so unhappy. She knew from experience that if she had only replied to her sister's angry remarks with that soft answer which turneth away wrath, as she had done many and many a time before, she would not now be feeling so miserable.

Often, when Edith had been most unkind and unjust, and Alice had been called upon to bear from her sister the greatest coldness and neglect, she had been enabled to do so with a quiet, and even with a happy spirit; and often had her little friend Minnie wondered how it was that Alice Cornwall could bear with so much, and yet possess her soul in patience, and wear upon her countenance that sweet, bright smile, which, lovely as Alice was, formed, in Minnie's eyes, her chief beauty.

But if Minnie did not know the secret of Alice's patience, Alice herself knew it well. She had long known where to find strength and peace for all her need, and now that she had lost this strength and this peace, it was happy for her that she knew how to regain them.

Half an hour later, when Minnie Carpenter knocked at the door of Alice's room, and begged to be allowed to come in, Alice opened the door with a face from which every



shade of passion or annoyance had disappeared, and though the marks of tears were on her face, it was with her usual bright smile that she answered Minnie's inquiry, "whether her head was better?"

"You've been crying, Alice," said Minnie,—and she threw her arms around Alice's neck, and kissed her,—“I'm sure you have. Something has vexed you. Do tell me what it is, for I can't bear to see you unhappy.”

"I'm not unhappy, Minnie dear," replied Alice, "at least not now."

"Then you have been unhappy," said Minnie, "and it was Edith made you so. I know it was, for you wern't a bit vexed when you went up-stairs to dress for dinner. I was quite surprised when Edith told Miss Clifton you had such a headache you couldn't come down, for I thought you had seemed quite well all the morning. Do tell me all about it, Alice darling. I know it does one good to tell one's troubles to somebody who really loves one, and cares to hear about them, at least I'm sure it does me good to talk to you when I'm unhappy."

"But I'm not unhappy now, Minnie," said Alice, "and it wasn't Edith who made me so."

"Then who was it?" asked Minnie.

"It was I myself," replied Alice.

"You!" said Minnie, "how could you? People don't make themselves unhappy. It's something else or somebody else that makes them so."

Alice laughed.

"Oh, Minnie, I don't think so, I think other things and other people have very little power to make us either happy or unhappy. It seems to me that all the power to make us either one or the other comes from our own selves. And I'm sure it is so, at least I know it is with me. When I can feel in my own mind that I have done right, I always feel a sort of happiness even though I have many things to make me unhappy. But when I know I have been wrong and wicked, then I can't feel happy, although I may have everything in the world to make me so. Oh, indeed, Minnie dear, I think our happiness depends much more upon ourselves than upon any one else."

"Perhaps it does," said Minnie, gravely. "I begin to think so too. I'm sure yours does, Alice, or you never could be so merry and cheerful as you often are, when I know you must be feeling vexed and grieved. Do you know, Alice, I thought of you so much when I was learning the Collect and Epistle last Sunday, and when you said yours to Miss Clifton it seemed to me as if you were feeling every word you said. I think, Alice, you really do 'follow the example of Christ's humility and patience,' and when you bear so quietly with all Edith's rudeness, I'm sure it's because you want to be like Jesus, who made Himself of no reputation, but took upon Him the form of a servant."

Minnie's words, spoken so simply and sincerely, were too much for Alice. She burst into tears, as she answered, "Yes, Minnie dear, I do want to be like Jesus, and I think I do try. But oh, it's such hard work sometimes to get the

better of one's own wicked, sinful tempers, and very often I can't do what I know to be right, and then I am so miserable afterwards. I was in a great passion with Edith just now, and I spoke quick, angry words to her. I would rather you should know it, Minnie, I don't want you to think me better than I am. I am very sorry for it now. You don't know what a quick temper I've got. If I am not always watching and striving against it, something is sure to happen to make me give way to it."

"Then I'm sure," said Minnie, "you must keep a very good watch over it, for it is not very often you get angry."

"Not so often as I used to do," replied Alice. "Dear mamma used to tell me that it was one of my besetting sins, and when I remember how much trouble she used to take to show me all the sin and misery it brought with it, her words all come back to me just as if she were still alive and talking to me, and they seem to help me to get the better of my temper. I think too the more we strive to rule our temper, the easier it becomes, but very often I feel so angry even when I don't say anything, and you know, Minnie, God sees that, He looks at our thoughts and hearts, and very often we're sinning against Him, and making Him angry with us, when other people know nothing about it."

Minnie looked very grave, and for some minutes neither of the girls spoke.

Then Minnie said very thoughtfully, and rather sadly, "It must be very difficult to be a Christian. Dawson said

it wasn't so hard as one might think, but it seems to me it must be even harder."

"Oh, Minnie!" Alice replied, "I hope I have not been frightening you, and keeping you from wishing to walk in the right path, by telling you how hard I find it sometimes. It was very wrong of me to talk so to you, especially when I know that if I find it hard, it's because I don't go the right way to make it easy."

"Yes," said Minnie, "that is something like what Dawson said. She said the road seemed hard to those who didn't know how to get over the difficult places. She said it was by going to Jesus."

"Yes," said Alice, "it's the only way. I can't think why it is we should ever try any other. But we do. And then we are sure to lose courage, and to fall. It seems so easy to keep close to Jesus, and trust to Him to help us. And yet we are always losing sight of Him, and trusting to our own strength, and then we find it is only weakness, and we can do nothing at all. I'm glad, Minnie," she added, "I'm very glad you talk to Dawson, she's so good, she will help you so much. And then, Minnie, I will help you too, and you shall help me. We will do all we can to help each other."

"Yes," said Minnie, "that is what I want now. I want more than anything in the world to be good. And if you will help me, Alice, I will love you with all my heart."

Their conversation was interrupted by Edith's coming into the room to tell her sister it was "time to prepare to go

to Madame Bareilly's, but that Miss Clifton said she need not go if she did not feel perfectly well."

"I'm quite well now, thank you," said Alice. "My headache is quite gone."

Alice hesitated a moment. The crimson colour mounted into her cheeks and forehead, and then she said boldly, in a clear, firm tone, "I should not have had a headache, Edith, if I had not got into a passion. I'm very sorry I spoke so rudely to you, or said anything against Lady Georgina."

"What a goose you are, Alice," said Edith. "I wish you wouldn't be so foolish."

But in her secret heart Edith did not think her sister either a goose or foolish.

In spite of herself, a deep feeling of respect for Alice arose in Edith's mind, when her sister made this open avowal of the wrong she had done. Her conscience told her that there was a wide difference between Alice and herself. If she had but paused to consider in what that difference consisted, and to ask herself seriously which was pursuing the right path, how much better might it not have been for her.

But she did no such thing. She felt that Alice was very different from herself. In her heart she acknowledged her to be her superior. But the feeling was a disagreeable one, and she put it from her. The path in which Edith was walking might not be right or safe. She herself knew that it was not so, and the still small voice within sometimes told her that it would be better to stop and consider the way, and

whither it was likely to lead. But if the path was not right or safe, it was pleasant. And therefore Edith chose to follow it. She said no more to Alice about Mrs. Graham's invitation.

The sisters put on their things to go to Madame Bareilly's class.

As they were leaving the house, Miss Clifton called Edith into the library, and said, "I have written to my sister about this invitation of Mrs. Graham's which you wish to accept, but I find that the letter must go by this afternoon's post in order for us to have her answer in time. You had better take it with you, and post it on your way to Harley Street. Put it in on your way there, for you are detained sometimes, and it may be too late if you wait till you are returning."

Edith answered that she would be in time either way, for the post did not close till five, and they were never so late as that, and she took the letter.

They drove past the post-office, and Edith said nothing about the letter. She could not have forgotten it, for all the way to Harley Street her mind was dwelling upon Mrs. Graham's invitation, and the chances of their being able to accept it. Edith's heart was bent upon going. All Lady Georgina's relations would be there. She would be introduced to some amongst them, and might be able afterwards to claim almost an acquaintance with them. Besides, if once they had gone to a party of the nature which she knew this would be, Dora Milford would never again be able to

laugh at her, and declare, as she often did, that really one might as well be in the nursery as be kept so close as Edith and Alice were, and that they had seen no more of the world than their little sister at home, who was five years old, and not so much either, for she always came into the drawing-room when her mamma had a grand party, and really did know something of what society was like.

Dora Milford would be dreadfully annoyed if Edith and Alice were allowed to go to the Honourable Mrs. Graham's farewell party. This was another reason why Edith most earnestly desired to go.

But what chance was there of her being able to do so? None whatever, that Edith could see, if Mrs. Clifton's opinion were to be asked. If she had only had to deal with Miss Jane Clifton, who was so mild and gentle, and easily persuaded, Edith felt sure that she could in some way or other have gained her point. But if the question were referred to Mrs. Clifton, she knew that a decided negative would be returned to it.

Was this the reason why Edith Cornewall said nothing about the letter she had in her pocket as they drove past the post-office on their way to their singing lesson, and that after the lesson was over, she delayed so long in the waiting-room putting on her bonnet and shawl, that the clock had struck five some minutes before they reached the post-office on their way back?

"I have a letter to post," said Edith, quietly, as she pulled the check-string.

"It will be too late, Miss Edith," said Dawson, who had accompanied the girls. "It's past five now."

"Perhaps not," said Edith, "and if it is, it doesn't matter."

And as the man came to the door, she gave the letter to him, and desired him to put it in the box.

"I hope it isn't of any consequence," said Alice, good-naturedly, "I didn't know you had been writing to any one, Edith; who is it to?"

"A friend of mine," said Edith, mysteriously; "don't you be so inquisitive."

"Look how red she gets, Alice!" exclaimed Julia Carter, with one of her silliest laughs. "Depend upon it, she has been writing to some one she has no business to write to, I shall tell Mrs. Clifton."

"You are quite welcome," replied Edith, coolly.

"I know who the letter is to," whispered Minnie Carpenter to Alice, as they drove on. "It's to Lady Georgina Ashton again. That was why Edith got so red, and would not tell you when you asked. I don't wonder she was ashamed at our knowing that she was writing to her again, why, she sent her a note only yesterday."

"Yes," Alice thought, "of course the letter was to Lady Georgina. Edith thought I would be jealous. But I don't think I should have been. I'm trying not to be jealous any more. And I think I am succeeding."

When the girls were in their own room, Edith said, "Alice dear, don't mention at tea that we were too late for



the post this afternoon. Miss Clifton would think me dreadfully careless, and she is so fidgetty she would fancy, because I forgot one thing, I should forget everything else. So don't say anything about it at tea, and ask Marion not to. As for Minnie, she never speaks. But Marion is such a blab, she always must come out with everything, and I hate people thinking me careless. Marion will do anything you ask her to do, Alice, she is so absurdly fond of you."

"Well," said Alice, "I'll tell her, though really, Edith, I don't think it matters much. It isn't anything so very dreadful to be too late for the post, especially when the letter is your own, and you don't care whether it reaches to-morrow or the day after."

It never entered Alice's guileless mind to imagine that the letter was not Edith's own, or to suspect that she could have any other reason for wishing the subject not to be mentioned to Miss Jane Clifton, than the one which she avowed.

But Marion Carter was not quite so simple-minded. When Alice ran into her room before tea, and asked her to do as Edith wished, she laughed ironically.

"What a goose you are! Alice," she said, "what a complete goose you are not to see that there was something mysterious about that letter of Edith's. I saw it from the first. She got so red, and took such care we should none of us see it. Depend upon it, Edith doesn't want any one to know anything about that letter. I wonder, though, she did not take care it was posted in time. It was all her own fault. We were ready to come away long before she was.

She kept us a good ten minutes at Madame Bareilly's talking to Miss Somerville. However, she may set her mind quite at ease as far as I'm concerned. I'm not going to say anything about it. I wouldn't be ill-natured enough to do so if it's anything she doesn't want known."

"Oh but, indeed, Marion," replied Alice, warmly, "indeed it isn't that. I hope you don't for a moment think so. Do you suppose Edith would do such a thing as to write a letter she would not like seen?"

"I'm sure I don't know," said Marion; "she took very good care we shouldn't see that one. Pray has she told you who it's to?"

Alice was obliged to say that she had not.

"No, and she does not mean to, either," said Marion.

"But I think I know," said Alice,—greatly concerned that Marion should imagine for a moment that Edith could be guilty of anything dishonourable,—“I think, indeed I'm almost sure, the letter was to her friend, Lady Georgina Ashton. And the only reason why she wouldn't tell me is because she knows we laugh at her sometimes about her friendship for Lady Georgina, and she can't bear being laughed at. But if you think Edith would do anything deceitful,—and you know, Marion, it would be dreadfully deceitful, and very wicked, to write a letter to any one she was not allowed to write to, and post it secretly,—if you think Edith could do such a thing as that, indeed you're very much mistaken.”

"All right," said Marion, carelessly, "you needn't put

yourself in a state of mind about it. I'm very glad you should have such a good opinion of Edith. For my part, I can't say I see where her goodness lies."

"Oh, Marion!" said Alice. And she looked so really vexed at hearing her sister spoken of in such a manner, that Marion, who was, as Edith had said, very sincerely fond of her, gave her a kiss, and said, "There, don't you be vexed, Alice. If Edith isn't good, I know who is. I only wish Julia was half such a sister to me as you are to Edith. So now let us go down to tea, and we won't say a word about letters or post-offices either, if it's a tender subject with Edith. Only, Alice, when I want to learn how to be good,—and really do you know I'm thinking of turning good too,—it seems to agree so well with you and Minnie. She used to be such a stupid, grumpy little thing, there was no saying a word to her, but now she's getting most delightfully amiable, and I believe it's all your doing, for it's only since she has been such friends with you. I'm beginning to think it's rather a fine sort of thing to be good, and read one's Bible, and say one's prayers, and—"

But here Alice interrupted her, for she could not bear to hear Marion speak of such things in her light, careless way,—"Please don't speak like that, Marion," she said gently.

"Like what?" said Marion, "I really don't know what I was saying. That's just like me. I begin to say something, and then I go on to something else, and then I forget what I began with. Oh, now I know what it was! I was saying that Minnie had wonderfully improved since you took

her in hand. And that when I want to turn good too, I shall come and get some lessons from you. But I sha'n't go to Edith. For I don't admire her style of goodness at all. But do make haste down, Alice, or we shall both get a lesson on punctuality from Miss Clifton. And if I hate one thing more than another, it's being lectured by Miss Clifton! If Mrs. Clifton has anything to say, well, she says it, and leaves us to remember it, and there's an end of it. But Miss Clifton goes on and on about a thing until I declare she drives me nearly wild. She hammers away until she does not leave a scrap of what she is saying on my mind. Oh, dear, she tries my temper most awfully."

"Well," said Alice, "then you'd better make a little more haste, and not put yourself in the way of having your temper tried. And you know, Marion, it isn't right to speak like that of Miss Clifton."

"No, I know it isn't," replied Marion, laughing, "but then it's my way, unfortunately, not to do what is right, and to say just what comes uppermost, whether it's right or whether it's wrong. I suppose when I turn good, I shall have to keep my tongue in better order, amongst other things. And really I don't know whether that would not be rather a good thing."

"I think it would," said Alice, laughing, "but I'm not going to stop here any more, talking." And she left Marion's room, and ran down to the dining-room, where tea was waiting.

## CHAPTER XI.

"When thy untried steps shall wander  
Forth from Home's calm roof;  
Goodness shall be there to guide thee,  
Evil, stand aloof.  
Still those eyes shall keep their sunshine  
Free from crime or care,  
Still be gently raised to Heaven,  
Full of love and prayer."

ANON.

How fortunate, Edith thought, it was for her that she happened to be the only one of the girls down-stairs when, two mornings afterwards, the servant brought the letters into the breakfast-room, and handed them to Miss Clifton.

"There is one for you, Edith," she said, "from your papa, I conclude, for it is a foreign letter. And here is one from my sister, so now we shall know what to do about this party."

Edith opened her own letter, and glanced rapidly at its contents, but she was not sufficiently occupied by them to prevent her taking a very evident interest in the letter Miss Clifton was reading, and she looked up quickly when, at length, Miss Clifton laid it on the table, and said,—

"My sister does not say a single word about Mrs. Graham's party, Edith, she has answered every one of my questions excepting that one."

Edith felt herself getting red in spite of her efforts to appear indifferent, but Miss Jane Clifton was not very discerning, and she saw nothing suspicious in the quiet way in which Edith answered, "I dare say she forgot to say anything about it."

"But it is not at all like my sister to forget it," said Miss Clifton, "she is always so careful in answering every question that is of the slightest consequence."

"Perhaps," said Edith, gathering courage from Miss Clifton's evident simplicity, "she did not think it of consequence. I mean," she added, "we go so often to Mrs. Graham's, I dare say Mrs. Clifton took it for granted we should have accepted the invitation."

"Perhaps she did," replied Miss Clifton, "you are sure the letter was posted, Edith?"

"Yes, ma'am, quite sure," Edith replied. She felt glad that Miss Clifton had not added "in time," but even if she had done so, would not Edith's answer have been the same?

Surely, when once we have brought ourselves to so low a pitch of moral rectitude as to be able coolly and perseveringly to act a lie, it requires but a very slight effort to descend one little step lower, and give utterance in words to a deliberate falsehood. But there was no necessity for Edith to take this step at this moment. Miss Clifton was apparently quite satisfied, for she said,—

"Then I suppose my sister took it for granted. Silence certainly gives consent. You can write and accept your friend's invitation."

As she said these last words, Alice and Minnie, and the two Carters, entered the room, and Miss Clifton, reproving them for being late, and declaring that she would not wait for Dora, desired Minnie to ring the bell. The girls took their places, and while they were waiting for the servants, Alice asked Edith if they had leave to go to Mrs. Graham's?

"Yes," said Edith. And then she turned aside the channel of Alice's thoughts by saying, "there's a long letter from papa," and she placed the letter in her sister's hand, who thought no more at that moment of Mrs. Graham or her invitation.

As soon as prayers were concluded, Alice looked over her father's letter, and when breakfast was ended, she took it with her, to enjoy a second and more quiet reading of it in her favourite evergreen walk. When she came in, she found Edith sealing a note at the table in their own bedroom.

"Oh," said Alice, quickly, "is that note to Mrs. Graham, Edith?"

"Yes," said Edith; "Miss Clifton told me I might write and accept her invitation for Wednesday. Our answer ought to have gone long ago."

"But I'm sorry you wrote without speaking to me," said Alice, timidly. She hesitated a few minutes, grew very red, and then, in a voice which showed that she was perfectly

aware that what she was going to say would not please her sister, she added, "because, Edith, I don't mean to go to that party."

"Don't mean to go!" exclaimed Edith, "and pray why not?"

She spoke sharply, and poor Alice felt more than ever unwilling to speak. But, great as the effort was, she had made up her mind to it, and though the colour had deepened in her cheeks, and her heart was beating fast, it was in a perfectly firm voice that she replied,—

"I don't wish to go, Edith, and there is no reason why I should."

"Yes, there is," said Edith, "I wish it, and you ought to go to oblige me."

"But you can go without me," said Alice.

"Yes, of course, I can, and I shall too," replied Edith; "but I wish you to come too, and why in the world shouldn't you wish to come, I should like to know, unless it is to make yourself as disagreeable as you can, which really seems, just now, to be a favourite amusement of yours? Just say, if you can, why you don't wish to go."

The tears were in Alice's eyes, and though she tried very hard to be composed, her voice was trembling as she answered,—

"I would tell you, Edith, if I could, only you frighten me, by getting so angry. Indeed, I don't mean to be disagreeable, I want to please you more than I can say, and I



should like to tell you just what is in my mind, as—as I used to do, if only you would let me, and not be angry.”

“Well,” said Edith, “pray tell me.”

And she composed herself to listen.

The manner in which she did so, sitting back in her chair, twisting the note she had just sealed between her fingers, and looking at it with an ironical smile on her face, was not very encouraging, but Alice thought she had best summon all her courage, and say what she had to say while she was about it.

“I thought, when first the note came, Edith, that it would be better not to go. I did not think papa would like our going to such a large party. And do you know, Edith, I thought that perhaps if Major Graham had been at home we should not have been asked. I don’t know, of course, perhaps it’s only my fancy, but I think sometimes when there are parties, and Mrs. Graham wishes to ask us, Major Graham won’t allow us to be asked, because he thinks papa would not like it. But I thought Mrs. Clifton would be sure to say No, and so there would be an end of it. But since Mrs. Clifton says we may go, I suppose, indeed I know, there can’t be any harm in our going. At least there can’t be any harm in *your* going, if you think it won’t hurt you. But, Edith, you know everybody must judge for themselves what is right or not, because you know we are all so different, that some things would be wrong for some people that wouldn’t be at all wrong for others. And I’m sure it would be very wrong for me to go to that party, because I know it

would hurt me very much. And so I've quite made up my mind not to go. And if I hadn't made up my mind before, dear papa's letter would have decided me. You saw what he said in that last sentence, Edith. It almost seemed to me, as I read it, as if papa must have known what state of mind that letter would find me in, and have written it on purpose. I'm so thankful he did write it, for it makes me feel just as if he had told me himself what I ought to do. I could not go to that party now. You must not accept for me, Edith."

Edith laughed a forced laugh, in which there was no mirth, only a great deal of annoyance, and impatience, and ill-temper.

"Well, I've heard you to the end. You can't say I have not. And such nonsense I never heard in all my life. It is right, and it isn't right! and you think, and you don't think! Really, Alice, after all the trouble Mrs. Clifton has taken with you, it is a pity you have not learned to arrange your ideas a little more clearly."

Alice's ideas were perfectly clear to her own mind, but she thought it very probable that she had not expressed them very clearly to Edith, and unwilling to enter into further argument, she said,—“There is papa's letter, Edith.”

And laying it upon the writing-table by her sister's side, she left the room.

Edith looked once more at the note in her hand, and then carried it to Dawson's room.

“Miss Clifton says you are going out this morning, Daw-

son, and can post the letters. Here is one I want you to take."

"Very well, Miss," said Dawson. "Miss Alice tells me you have had a letter from the Colonel."

"Oh yes," replied Edith, "and there is a message for you. I'll go and fetch it, and read it to you."

The letter was brought, and the message read to Dawson, whose eyes overflowed with tears as she listened to the words which told of the Colonel's continued regard for her, and confidence in her.

"Thank you, Miss Edith," she said; "those words have done my very heart good, coming as they do from that far country to tell of one who, be he far or near, is always close to my heart and thoughts. I am not one to forget old friends. It isn't in my nature to do it, Miss Edith. And, thank God, it isn't in your papa's neither, no, nor was it in your mamma's. I've worked hard in my life, and gone through a good deal for my master and mistress, both at home and abroad, but the Lord has given me this satisfaction in my work, to be remembered with love and kindness by those I've worked for. And that's better than any wages, Miss Edith, a great deal better. There's no amount of money could ever repay me, or be to me what those few blessed words of your dear papa's are. They make me feel as if all the 'faithful service he bears in mind,' was just nothing compared with what I'd gladly do for him to show my respect and gratitude."

Edith's conscience reproached her. Dawson meant no reproof, but her words furnished one in themselves.

"It's a very interesting letter," she said; "if you like I'll read it you."

And Edith sat down on Minnie's little stool which stood in its usual place by Dawson's side, and read aloud her father's letter, while "faithful Dawson," as Colonel Cornwall termed her, and as she well deserved to be termed, would not even resume her needle-work, but took off her spectacles, and laid them by her work upon the table, while she gave her whole attention to the words of her master's letter.

Edith read the letter through until she came to the last sentence, which she did not seem to fancy reading aloud. She folded up the letter, and put it in her pocket, but after she had returned to her own room, she took it out again, and read the following lines over thoughtfully,—

"I hear from Mrs. Clifton that two or three of her pupils will be confirmed in the autumn, and she seems to wish that you and Alice should be amongst the number. I should wish it very much also, if—and only if—you can both of you truly believe that you are in a fit state of mind to enter upon so solemn a rite. You know what confirmation is,—a voluntary taking upon ourselves all the vows made for us at our baptism. You have only to think how solemn those vows are to see what an important thing confirmation is. Truly grieved should I be if either of you were to enter upon it, as, alas, so many do, as a mere form, and from no

higher motive than because you have now attained the age at which it is generally expected that young people shall be prepared for confirmation. I would far rather that you should not be confirmed than that you should merely be so in order to do as others do, and should, without thought or feeling, go up to the table of the Lord with a lie in your right hand. I would ask you each to read over the Baptismal Service, to read it thoughtfully and prayerfully, considering well all that is implied in those solemn vows, and then, if you really desire, with your own mouth and consent, openly before the church, to ratify and confirm the same, most thankful shall I feel that you are doing so, and your father's earnest prayers will be with his beloved children, that God's 'fatherly hand may be ever over them, and His Holy Spirit ever with them, leading them to the knowledge of, and obedience to, His word, and so directing, governing, and sanctifying both their hearts and bodies in the ways of His laws, and in the works of His commandments, that through His most mighty protection, they may be preserved in body and soul, through our Lord Jesus Christ,'—to whose care I commend you both."

These were the concluding words of Colonel Cornewall's letter. Edith read them, and for a moment she felt that what Alice had said of herself applied also, and with still greater force, to her, and that her father must almost have known in what state of mind his letter would find her, and desired to open her eyes to the fact that in entertaining, as she was doing, the idea of being confirmed in her present

state of feeling, she was indeed meditating no less a sin than that of voluntarily presenting herself before God, as her father said, with a lie in her right hand.

These thoughts forced themselves upon Edith's mind as she sat with the last page of her father's letter open before her. But she did not allow them to remain there. They made her feel uncomfortable, and so she turned from them. There was plenty of time to think about such things. The confirmation was not until next September. Mrs. Graham's party was for next Wednesday. The one required her immediate attention. The other could be deferred until a more convenient season.

So Edith put her father's letter away in her desk, and, with it, she put from her all such thoughts as she felt would interfere with her pleasurable anticipations of Mrs. Graham's "farewell party."

Alice would not go to it. Edith felt quite sure of this, for, good-natured as Alice certainly was, and easy as it was to persuade her in most things, Edith had learned lately that, in some things, Alice could be firm. Wherever principle was concerned, there Alice could hold her ground even against her determined, self-willed sister, and since she had made up her mind that it would be wrong for her to go to Mrs. Graham's party, Edith knew that no arguments of hers would be of any avail in leading her to change her resolution, however much they might serve to worry and distress her. So she determined to say no more to Alice on the subject. After all, it was perhaps just as well for her that Alice was

not going. Miss Jane Clifton was so unsuspecting, that Alice's refusing to go would not awaken any other idea in her mind than that which Edith intended to present before it, namely, that her sister was shy and timid, and preferred staying with her little friend Minnie, to going amongst strangers.

And Alice's absence would leave her more at liberty to enjoy herself without restraint, for, strange as it may seem, Edith often felt the restraint of her gentle little sister's society to be very galling.

Alice never put herself forward. She never gave Edith any advice, or attempted in the least to restrain her. But she walked steadily on in the narrow way herself, and Edith, as she looked at her, and saw how widely apart their two paths had now become, could not but feel that Alice had kept in the straight road, while she had wandered far away into a broader, but far less safe one.

The clear light of Alice's upright, humble daily life shone brightly before Edith's eyes whenever she turned them that way. She could not bear to look upon that light. It only served to make her own path seem darker, and more dangerous. So she turned her eyes away from Alice altogether, and, except when she was unwillingly obliged to do so, never gave her sister a thought.

## CHAPTER XII.

"In some gay hour vice steals into the breast;  
Perchance she wears some softer virtue's vest:  
By unperceived degrees she tempts to stray,  
Till far from virtue's path she leads the feet away."

COLERIDGE.

It was about five o'clock on Wednesday afternoon when Alice went to look for Edith to ask if she could be of any use in helping her to dress for Mrs. Graham's party.

She met Edith on the stairs, and struck by something peculiar in her manner, asked "if anything was the matter."

"The matter!" said Edith, with more than her usual sharpness,—and lately Edith's manner had, in speaking to her sister, become very sharp,—"no, of course there's nothing the matter: what an absurd question!"

"I thought you looked as if there were," said Alice. "I came to see if I could help you to dress."

"No, thank you," said Edith, "I can dress myself."

And, passing Alice, she ran down-stairs, without Alice's perceiving that she held in her hand a note, which she had crumpled up when she met her sister, and which had been indeed the cause of the annoyed expression on her face which had attracted Alice's attention.



She had just gone into her room to dress when this note was placed in her hand, and after reading its contents rapidly, she decided on saying nothing about them, and, hearing some one coming up-stairs, she left her room in order to destroy the note. How earnestly she wished that it had never been written! It only made her feel uncomfortable, and she was sufficiently so already without needing anything to make her more so. Edith only read the note once, but the words fixed themselves on her mind.

"Dearest Edith,—I write a hurried line to let you know that it turns out that there was a case of scarlet fever in this new house of ours just before we came into it. It was unjustifiable in the people not to mention it, but, as it happens, it does not affect us, for Georgina had it not very long since, and I nearly died of it in my childhood, so I am not very likely to have it again. It may, however, affect some of those who are coming to our party to-night, and so Georgina and I have thought it better to let them all know, and a great trouble this has been. I hope you two girls have had it, or at all events that you will not be afraid to come, for I can't do without your beautiful music, or Alice's sweet face to adorn my party. Your sincerely attached, Sophia Graham.

"P. S.—The house had been thoroughly aired and fumigated, as they call it, before the people let it to us."

This note made such an impression on Edith's mind, that she turned into the garden to recover herself after reading and destroying it.

With all her heart she wished Mrs. Graham had not written it.

There was, however, nothing to do but to keep her own counsel about it. If she showed it to Miss Jane Clifton she would take fright at once, and declare Edith should not go. She did not know whether she herself had had the scarlet fever or not, and if she asked Dawson, it would arouse her curiosity, and she might interfere with Miss Clifton. Besides, there could be no danger. The house had been thoroughly aired. And, even if there were danger, Edith was not exposing anybody to it but herself. It was a good thing, as it turned out, that Alice was not going, or she might have felt some scruples of conscience at concealing the fact contained in Mrs. Graham's note; but now the right thing unquestionably was to say nothing about it.

So, tearing the note into the smallest possible pieces, Edith scattered them to the winds, and returned to her room to dress.

Alice was there, and Edith found that it was now so late that it would be wise to accept her sister's renewed offer to assist her in her preparations for the party, which were scarcely completed when Dawson came to say that the cab was at the door, and she herself ready to accompany Edith as far as Mrs. Graham's.

"Good bye, Alice," she said; "I suppose I shall not be back to-morrow until the afternoon. Mrs. Graham will most likely bring me home when they go for their drive."

And with a hurried kiss Edith left her sister.

Alice listened to her quick step as she ran down-stairs, and to the sharp sound of the front door shutting after her and a feeling of loneliness came over her.

There had been a time when Edith would not have gone away so carelessly to a gay party, and left Alice at home with scarcely a parting word. In their happy childish days the sisters had scarcely known what it was to be divided, and if it happened that one went anywhere without the other, it was always a source of amusement to their parents to witness the lengthened leave-takings which were gone through on parting, and the rapturous embraces which took place when they again met. Even a day's separation was then a subject for regret. But now it was evident to Alice that Edith could leave her without one regretful feeling.

It made Alice very sad to feel thus separated from her only sister, and it was with a feeling of gratitude that she remembered that Minnie was still left to her, and that if each day was drawing Edith further from her, each day was also bringing Minnie nearer to her.

She thought she would go and look for Minnie now, and ask her to come and take a turn in the garden, and she was going to her room for this purpose, when she met Marion Carter in the passage.

"What, Alice!" exclaimed Marion, "I thought you and Edith were going to some grand party."

"Edith is gone," replied Alice, "but I did not care about it."

"Not care about it!" said Marion; "what a queer girl

you are, to be sure! Why, I delight in parties. And I'm sure, if I were you, I should like them a great deal better even than I do now."

"Should you?" said Alice, innocently, "why?"

"Because," answered Marion, in her usual quick, ingenuous way, "because you're so pretty, of course, and pretty people are always admired at parties, and made so much of. That's what I like at parties. One gets so much attention. And I know very well, Alice, that if I were as pretty as you are, people would pay me lots of attention, and I should think that just delightful. Why, Julia and I were saying just now that we were sure you would be the prettiest girl there, and what—"

But here Alice interrupted her, "please don't talk like that, Marion."

"Why not?" said Marion, "it's only the truth. You need not pretend to be so modest, Alice. Don't tell me that you don't know you're pretty, just as well as I do, or anybody else who has got two eyes in their head. I suppose you look in the glass sometimes, and you can't be such a goose as not to know whether you have a pretty face or not. Why shouldn't I say what I think?"

"Because it's silly," said Alice. "I want you to tell me where Minnie is."

"In her room," said Marion, "at least I think so; she was just now."

"Well," said Alice, "I want her to come in the garden with me."

And she passed quickly on to Minnie's room to look for her.

But Minnie was not there. An open book, however, lay upon the dressing-table, and Alice took it up to see what Minnie had been reading. As she laid it down, her eyes fell upon the looking-glass before her, and Marion Carter's words, silly as she had thought them, came again into her mind, and brought with them a feeling of pleasure. Alice's eyes fell upon her own face, a very fair one certainly.

People said continually that she was the image of her mother, and Alice could herself see that this was true. She had the same large blue eyes and long eyelashes, the same delicate features and bright complexion, and the same auburn hair, not worn, as her mother's had been, in long curls, but fastened at the back of her small, well-shaped head, and falling on each side of her slender neck in rich waving masses. Marion Carter had said truly that it was impossible Alice could look at herself in the glass, and be unaware of her own beauty. And Alice was perfectly aware of it, at this moment very painfully aware, for Marion's words came before her mind, and, as they did so, her peace was troubled.

For an instant Alice stood before the glass, with her eyes fixed upon it, and then a verse of Scripture came across her memory, "Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity."

Alice remembered afterwards that once, when she was a very little child, her mother had found her standing on a chair in the drawing-room looking intently at her own rosy

little face in the glass, and that taking her down, she had led her into her own room, and finding out this verse in the Psalms, had made her learn it by heart, and repeat it to her then, and that night had introduced it into her prayers as she knelt by her mother's knee.

It had not made very much impression upon her at the time, but at this moment the whole scene rushed across her memory. She fancied that she could see again the grave look which came over her mother's face at the sight of her little girl standing before the glass, that she could feel her now lifting her from the chair, and leading her from the room, and hear again the soft yet reproving voice in which she repeated to her the words of the text, and told her that they were written by one of God's servants, to whom God had given good gifts, and who feared lest he should be tempted by his own evil heart to glory in them, and become vain and proud.

At the remembrance of this little scene, which came so strangely back to her, after having lain for so many years sealed and unthought of in the treasure-house of memory, Alice's eyes filled with tears, and almost unconsciously the words "Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity" rose to her lips.

She turned to leave the room, and as she did so, her eyes fell upon the glass, and she saw that it was dimmed with the breath that had fallen on it. The thought arose in her mind that yet more easily than one breath would stain the brightness of that clear mirror, so easily would one thought of sin

or vanity obscure the brightness of the soul, and cause the Saviour's image to be but dimly reflected there. Without again allowing her eyes to fall upon the glass, she left Minnie's room and returned to her own.

Taking her mother's miniature from its case, she gazed long and earnestly upon it, and then kneeling in prayer, she asked her Heavenly Father to grant that if she were to resemble that beloved mother in person, she might by His grace resemble her in mind also, and that He would grant to her an abundance of that lowliness and humility which had been the distinguishing feature of her mother's character.

A knock at the door disturbed her, and she rose to admit Marion Carter.

"You were looking for Minnie," she said, "so I came to tell you that she has gone out with Dawson."

"Thank you," said Alice, "I am sorry for it, for I wanted to have a walk with her in the garden. It is such a lovely evening."

"Yes, lovely," said Marion; "I suppose you would not care about having me as a companion instead?"

"Yes, indeed I should," replied Alice, quickly, "I should like it very much. I will get my hat and come at once. We shall have nearly an hour before tea."

As the two girls walked down the gravel path which led to Alice's favourite Evergreen Walk, Marion said, in a voice which for her was really quite melancholy,—for Marion was scarcely ever known to open her mouth except to laugh or joke,—"I'm very fond of you, Alice."

"I'm very glad to hear it," said Alice, laughing, "it's very pleasant to be liked."

"Yes," said Marion, "more gravely even than before, "but I don't think you like me half so much as I like you, and you know it isn't pleasant to love people, and for them not to love us in return."

"No," said Alice, "indeed it is not."

And she thought of Edith, and the love which had been taken from herself to be bestowed on Lady Georgina.

"But I don't know why you should think that I don't like you, Marion," she added, "for indeed I do very much, and I would do anything for you."

"Oh yes, I know you would, because you're so good-natured. And I believe you like everybody in a way, at least I'm sure you wouldn't dislike any one, or turn up your nose at them as that conceited Dora Milford does. You're a great deal too good for that. What a disagreeable girl she is, is she not?"

"Please, Marion, don't let us talk about Dora," said Alice. "And you must not call me good, or else you will be making me conceited too, and then you will think me disagreeable also. I like you very much, Marion, and I want to be very friendly with you, and have as many walks and talks as you like, only you must promise me not to praise me and flatter me as you often do, because it does me harm,—you don't know, Marion, how much harm it does me," she added in such an earnest, pleading voice, that Marion laughed aloud.



"Flatter!" she said, "I don't flatter you. Flattery is,—let me see, what did Mrs. Clifton tell me one day flattery was? Oh, I know, 'it is paying silly compliments to people, often without even meaning the things we say, and generally in order to obtain some selfish end for our own advantage.' So I'm innocent of ever flattering you, Alice. For if ever I praise you, it can't be to get something out of you, for though you do help me in my exercises and translations, you're always ready to do it without my putting myself out of the way to coax you. And as to not meaning what I say, why, if I do tell you you're the nicest girl in the school, and the prettiest too, it's just the truth, and nothing but the truth."

"Well but, Marion," said Alice, "that's no reason you should tell me so. You can't tell whether it's the truth or not, because you know you say you like me, and so of course you're partial to me, and I have a great many faults that you know nothing about, very 'bad faults they are, if you knew them you would not think me good any more. But even if I had not, Marion, and if I really were as nice and good as you say, you should not tell me so, because it makes me feel vain, and if you talk like that, I must keep away from you,—just as I would from any person who I knew would give me some disorder,—" she added, laughing; "you know we would not go and put ourselves in the way of such things. And it's of much greater consequence that we should keep out of the way of getting harm to our minds, than of hurting our bodies."

"Dear me!" said Marion, "well you *are* good! You're better even than I thought you were. For I thought even good people liked to hear their own praises. I'm sure my aunt Maria does! She's what is called a very good woman. She cuts out clothes for the poor, and she goes three times a week to the village school, and to visit the people in the dirty cottages, and she has got no end of good works always on hand. But oh, does not she think herself good! And doesn't she like other people to think so, and say so! She thinks it's a just tribute to her goodness. And when people praise her to her face, she drinks it all down, and it does her good like a medicine, and sends her on her way a great deal better and stronger than she was before. She is not at all of your way of thinking about such things, Alice. If she were, perhaps I should like her better. For I don't care about good people that think so much of their own goodness, and show it off. Let me see, what's the word? *Humility*, isn't it? Yes, and a very pretty word it is. But it is not in Aunt Maria's dictionary!"

Marion ran on so quickly that Alice could not check her, and now that at length she paused to take breath, Alice scarcely knew what to say. She did not like to be continually reproving Marion for everything she said. She feared lest by doing so she should lead her to think that she also was conceited and disagreeable, and prevent her from seeking her society any more. Alice would have been very sorry to drive her thus from her, and yet she felt as if it were quite

wrong to let her go on in her wild way without attempting to check her.

"There's no making you talk quietly," she said, "you will rattle on so about everything."

"Yes," said Marion, "it's my way, and I can't help it. It's a very bad way, I know, and I should be very glad to mend it, only it's so hard to get out of bad habits; perhaps, Alice, if you and I get to be friends, which I want us to be very much, it will make it easier for me to try and do right. Minnie has changed so much since she has been such friends with you. And do you know, Alice, I should really like to change too. The girls think I can do nothing but laugh and joke. And I know I am very merry, and a great talker, and fond of all sorts of fun, but for all that I have my grave moments too, and lately I have had more of them, and I don't think, indeed I'm quite sure, that I'm not a bit what I ought to be, especially now when we are going to be confirmed. I suppose, Alice, you and Edith will be confirmed too. You are both older than I am."

"Yes," said Alice, "I hope we shall. I should like to be very much, if I were quite sure I were fit for it; but you know, Marion, it's a very solemn thing to be confirmed of one's own free will, and now we are quite old enough to know what we are doing, and I don't think we ought to be the same afterwards as before."

"No," said Marion, "I don't think we ought. That was the very thought that came into my mind last Sunday even-

ing when Mr. Morton preached about the confirmation. I don't always listen to the sermon, but I think I heard every word of that one, and when he said that about its being necessary that we should come out from among the careless, and be quite separate from them, or else God would not accept us for His sons and daughters, it made me feel very uncomfortable, because I know that I am just as careless as ever I can be, and that though I am going to be confirmed, it's only because papa and mamma wish it, and because I'm old enough. And as for being different after my confirmation from what I am now, I never thought of such a thing until Mr. Morton said so much about it on Sunday."

Marion's voice now was grave almost to sadness, and Alice looked at her with astonishment. She could scarcely believe that it was really Marion, the giddy, careless Marion, who was talking to her on such a solemn subject, in such a low, earnest voice; and, greatly interested, she replied,—

"But you will think about it now, Marion, I am sure you will. And you will be so much happier if you do."

"Yes," said Marion, quickly, "I think I should, and do you know, Alice, I don't always feel happy although I do laugh and talk so much; sometimes I feel quite low-spirited, even when I have been most merry. It seems to me then as if I wanted something better than anything I have."

"Oh yes," said Alice, "I know the feeling quite well. I have had it very often. I used to have it almost always, but now it does not come very often, only when it does it makes me very miserable."

"Why used you to have it always?" asked Marion, "and why don't you have it often now?"

"I don't know," said Alice, "and yet I think I do know, only it isn't very easy to explain what one feels. One knows quite well one's self, but it's so difficult to put it in words."

"Yes, I know," said Marion; "one never can explain what one wants to say, but please tell me this, because I want so very much to know, for when that sort of empty feeling comes over me, I do so long to get rid of it. What made yours go away? Why don't you often have it now?"

Alice was silent for a minute, and both girls walked on a few steps without speaking.

Then Alice said slowly, but very earnestly, "I think it's God who sends that feeling into our minds, and I think it's only God who can take it out of them."

"But God makes people happy, I thought," said Marion, "and the feeling I mean makes one wretched. It takes away all one's happiness. It makes one miserable."

"Yes," said Alice, "miserable for the time. But I think that's the way God does. He makes one unhappy first to make one happy afterwards, at least it was like that with me, Marion, and I believe it is with most people. For Minnie used to be miserable, and now she often says how happy she feels. And one day when papa was telling us a great deal about his early life, he told us that he used to be very unhappy, and that he always had that sort of empty,  
+ but not alone.

longing feeling, until he learned to love Jesus, and now he is so good, and so happy too,—oh, Marion, I wish you knew papa, I wish so much that you could talk to him; he would tell you all about it much better than I can.”

Marion burst into tears.

“ Oh, Alice ! ” she said, “ what a blessing it is to have been brought up all your lives as you have been. Nobody ever tried to make us good. Nobody ever talks to us about good things except Aunt Maria, and then it’s in such a hard cross way, mamma can’t bear her, and I’m sure I don’t wonder, for all her religion seems to consist in finding fault. She preaches to mamma about bringing us up better, and she preaches to us about being better, long dry sermons, any one of us would go a mile out of our way to avoid her and them. But I like talking to you, and I think so would Julia, only she doesn’t care much about talking at all. They think at home that I’m sillier than Julia. Aunt Maria does, I know. She often says that there is some hope of her, because she’s quiet, but there’s none of me, because I am so giddy and make such a noise, but, for all that, I think more than Julia does, and graver thoughts too.”

“ Yes,” said Alice, “ I think you do.”

She always had thought that there was more in Marion Carter than might be supposed, and that she was very superior to her twin-sister Julia, notwithstanding Julia’s more sedate and steady manner.

“ I was going to say,” continued Marion, “ that Julia makes me think of that verse in the Proverbs, ‘ even a fool

is counted wise when he holds his peace,' but I suppose you would call that unkind, only really, Alice, Julia is a trial to me, for though she is always with me, she never speaks about anything. I believe she never thinks about anything at all, and so she has not anything to speak about. But I *do* think, and often I have wanted so much to have some one to talk to. I have been quite jealous often when I have seen you and Minnie Carpenter having your long talks together, and I made up my mind I would get hold of you the very first opportunity I could."

"I wish very much I could do anything for you," said Alice gravely.

"But you can," replied Marion, quickly; "you can tell me just what I want to know, how to be always happy,—not merry, but happy."

"But it is not easy to tell," said Alice, "let us sit down here, and if you like I will tell you what made me happier. I have never talked about it to any one, not even to Minnie, because, though she was very unhappy once, she was never at all like me. But you are much more so. And if you like I will tell you what I used to feel. It was a long time ago, now.

"There never were any of us except Edith and I, and we always lived at home. We never went to school, or had a governess, and we scarcely ever saw any other children, or had any one else to play with. Edith was always very clever. There is only a year, you know, between us, but she knew how to read three or four years before I did, and she

was always very fond of books, even when she was quite little, and when we grew older, and learned music, she was very fond of that too, and all she cared for, was for reading and practising; she never would play much with me, and I used to be so lonely sometimes playing alone. I used to think it unkind of her when mamma sent us to play together after our lessons were done, always to take a book, and sit down to read."

"So it was," interrupted Marion, "she was very selfish."

"Not worse than I was," said Alice. "It was just as selfish in me to wish her to give up her reading to play with me, as it was in her to go on reading by herself, and leaving me to play alone. But it used to make me unhappy. And then, Edith always did everything better than I did, and was praised by all our masters, and that made me jealous, and though I had many things to make me happy, I used to think myself very unhappy, and I often felt lonely and dull, and, instead of being merry, I got quite cross and fretful, so much so that mamma perceived it. She did not tell me so then, but she told me afterwards, and it made her watch to find out the reason, and she soon found out why it was, and then, oh, Marion! I can't tell you how she managed, for she was so good and kind, she did not mind what trouble she took,—but she made me see things all so differently, and afterwards I was so much happier, quite happy indeed."

"But how?" said Marion; "people can't make other people happy, everybody has got their own mind, and nobody else can touch it, however good or clever they may be."

"No," said Alice, "of course not, but mamma showed



me the way to be happy. She made it all appear plain and easy. Of course she could not make me walk in it, but she showed it to me so plain that I longed to walk in it, and then she helped me, oh so much, I know I never could have got on without her."

"And what was the way?" said Marion; "could I walk in it too?"

"Oh yes," said Alice, "it is for every one. Mamma was always telling us that. She showed me why I was not a happy child, that it was because I was living for myself, that I wanted more attention, and love, and praise than I received, and she told me that so long as children or people lived for themselves they must always be unhappy, and feel a craving for something they had not got."

"But if we don't live for ourselves, who *are* we to live for?" replied Marion. "For our parents, I suppose; but some people have no parents, and some parents don't care how their children live, or what they do; *who* are we to live for?"

"For Jesus," said Alice. "Jesus is always with us. And He is for everybody, mamma showed me so plainly that if we would only go to Him and let Him love us, and love Him in return, we should never feel lonely any more, but we should always have some one to love us, and care for us, and we should have always something to employ us in working for such a kind Friend, and the empty feeling would go away."

"And did you do it?" asked Marion, eagerly.

"I began to try," replied Alice, "and mamma helped me, and after that everything seemed different. When I used to think Edith unkind, I tried to remember how very little neglect that was to bear, compared with all Jesus bore for us; and when I could not do my lessons well, and Edith was praised, and I was blamed, it made me happy to think, if I had done my best, that Jesus knew it was not my fault, and that He did not love clever and learned people any better than others. And then mamma showed Edith too that she ought to give up her own will to please me sometimes, and taught us both to give up to one another, and after that we loved each other much more and were both much happier. I can't tell you how it was, for I don't quite know myself, only this I *do* know, that it is going to Jesus that makes one happy."

"And any one may go to Him," said Marion. "I wish I could."

"Then I know you will, Marion!" exclaimed Alice, earnestly, "for it's Jesus that makes you wish it. He will be so glad if you go to Him. It is such a happy thought, I think, that Jesus is just as glad to have one of us for His servant as He would be to have the greatest or the cleverest person in the world."

Alice's earnest words went home to Marion's heart. The wish that had arisen in her heart to go to the same Friend who had done so much for Alice, and who, she began to believe, would do as much for her also, was strengthened by Alice's words, and when Alice paused, she would have asked

further concerning the way which she must take to seek so kind a Friend, if their conversation had not been interrupted by Minnie Carpenter, who, at this moment, came running down the garden, and saying that every one thought they must be lost, told them that Miss Clifton desired they would both come in.

That evening, after tea, Marion came up to Alice, and said, "I have asked Miss Clifton, Alice, and she says, if you like, I may sleep in your room to-night, instead of Edith, should you like me to?"

"Yes, very much," said Alice, "and I will show you something in papa's letter I should like you to see."

"And we will have some more talking," said Marion. "I want to ask you a great many things."

But when the girls were in their room, neither of them seemed inclined to begin the conversation. They were both grave, and Alice was very shy. She could not speak first, though there were some things she wished particularly to say.

At length she took out her father's letter, and, turning to the last page, which spoke of their confirmation, placed it before Marion. And then, leaving her to read it, she knelt in prayer, and was just opening her Bible to read, when Marion, who was still sitting at the table with Colonel Cornwall's letter in her hand, though her eyes were overflowing with tears, and she could no longer see a word in it, rose from her seat, and throwing her arms round Alice's neck, said, "I know now that going to Jesus is what I want, and I see the way."

And pointing to the chair at which Alice had been kneeling, she added, "I never tried it before, but I will try it now."

And Marion knelt in the same place from which Alice had just risen, and her first prayer was uttered aloud in a burst of unrestrained weeping.

Alice was in bed when Marion rose from her knees, and coming to her, said, as she kissed her again, "I have begun to-day, will you pray that I may go on?"

"Yes," said Alice, earnestly, "I was praying for it then."

Which was happier at that moment, Alice lying quietly upon her pillow, with her heart uplifted in prayer, or Edith in Mrs. Graham's gaily-lighted drawing-room?

## CHAPTER XIII.

"Honour will oft elude the grasp,  
That rashly courts the prize;  
The radiant phantom we would clasp,  
Still as we follow, flies.  
But oft on Duty's lowly way,  
Unsought, will Honour meet  
The patient traveller, and lay  
Her treasures at his feet."

JAMES BURNS.

It was indeed a gaily-lighted drawing-room, and the party assembled there a far gayer one than Edith had ever been present at before. She was glad to have arrived before any of the other guests, for she felt that she should never have had courage to enter into so well-filled a room alone; even as it was, a sort of nervousness, which she had never known before, came over her, as she sat quietly in a corner, watching the parties of gaily-dressed people who were still arriving, and listening to their different names as they were announced by the footman.

Amongst them came Lady Louisa Egerton, and with her, to her surprise, was Dora Milford. Edith was wondering what could have brought her there, when her curiosity

was satisfied by Dora's almost immediately joining her and saying, "I suppose you're astonished to see me here."

"Yes," said Edith; "I thought you had gone down to stay in the country."

"So I had," replied Dora, "but my uncle had some business or other which obliged him to come up to town, and Aunt Louisa persuaded him to let us come with him. She wanted to go to the Concert last night. We met your friend Mrs. Graham there, and she asked us to come this evening, if we were not afraid of the scarlet fever, which we were not, nor I suppose are you either. What did Miss Clifton say about it? of course you have had it, or she would not have let you come, but even then I wonder she gave her consent, for she is such a fidget. And where's Alice?"

With all her heart Edith wished that Dora Milford had stayed where she was, at her aunt's country-house. She did not know what to say, for if she gave Dora any reason to suspect that she wished the fact about the fever to be concealed, she knew quite enough of Dora's feelings towards herself to feel sure that, for that very reason, she would take care that it should be made known.

So with an attempt to turn the conversation, she said, "Alice did not wish to come. She does not care about going out, she's so shy."

"But did not Miss Clifton make objections about the fever? I can't understand her letting you come. Mrs. Graham said she had sent you word, and that she was

very much afraid you and Alice would not be here in consequence."

"Well, I managed to come somehow," said Edith, evasively.

If it had been Marion Carter instead of Dora Milford, Edith would have told her the truth just as it was, and trusted to her good nature not to disclose it, or get her into trouble, but she could not trust to Dora's, neither indeed had she any wish to humiliate herself by owning the truth, and so putting herself in Dora's power.

But Dora was not to be put off so easily. "I tell you what," she said, maliciously enough, "I don't believe you said a word about it to Miss Clifton. I know her quite well enough to be pretty sure you would not be here to-night if you had, and I shall ask her when I go back next week."

"You're quite welcome," replied Edith, "and I hope you'll enjoy making yourself ridiculous in doing so, for very absurd you will feel when you hear Miss Clifton's answer."

"Shall I?" said Dora, "well, I'm willing to make the experiment."

And then she added, in a spiteful sort of way, "But I really must go and talk to some of the people. Half of them are my cousins or connections, the Egertons are such a tribe, and most of them are here to-night. I suppose you don't know many people, would you like me to introduce you to somebody?"

"No, thank you," said Edith, proudly. "Lady Georgina will be here in a moment."

"Will she?" said Dora, "she seems very busily engaged just now."

And she turned away to join a party of ladies who, escorted by several gentlemen, were passing through the ante-room. Edith remained alone in her quiet corner.

If she expected to be speedily joined by her friend Lady Georgina, she was to be disappointed, for that young lady appeared, as Dora had said, to be fully engaged in carrying on a conversation with a party of people at the other side of the room. Edith could just see her from where she sat, and as she watched her animated face, and saw her completely absorbed in what was going on, she relinquished all idea of her returning, and sitting back in her chair she began to feel rather dull amongst all the crowd of people.

Mrs. Graham's gay party was certainly not bringing her any very great pleasure. Edith was just coming to this conclusion, and her face was presenting a pretty clear index to the thoughts within, when Dora Milford again passed through the room, leaning on a gentleman's arm, her face lighted up with animation, while she replied to something he was saying to her with a merry laugh.

At the sight of Edith, still sitting alone in her corner, Dora gave a look of pity, which was more galling to Edith's spirit than the most insulting words could have been, and then, turning to the gentleman, she said, "I am going to introduce you to Miss Cornewall, she does not know anybody



here, and you must tell her who they all are, and try to amuse her,—really,” she added to Edith, “it is a shame to leave you here alone all the evening, at your first party, too; you will be wishing yourself back in the school-room, and thinking it is much less dull there than here. This is my cousin, Captain Granville. He can be very amusing when he chooses, and I hope he will exert himself for your benefit, so I shall leave him to do it.”

And an instant afterwards, Dora was talking gaily to another set of people, while Edith and Captain Granville stood side by side in the ante-room. After such an introduction, how could Edith feel anything but mortified, vexed, and thoroughly disinclined for conversation, while Captain Granville was anything but pleased at having been thus summarily deprived of his gay little cousin's society, and forced, against his will, to find amusement for a shy, and, as at that moment he could not help thinking, very disagreeable-looking school-girl.

The consequence was, as Dora had expected it would be, that after half an hour's very dull conversation, if conversation that could be called, which consisted of a string of very dry questions on the part of Captain Granville, and very short answers on the part of Edith, both the gentleman and the young lady were considerably relieved when at length Mrs. Graham appeared, and, begging her “dear Edith to forgive her for having neglected her so long, really she had so many people to receive, she had not had a moment,” re-

leased Captain Granville from the charge which his cousin had imposed upon him.

"I say, Dora," he exclaimed, as he joined the group of persons with whom she was conversing, "what do you mean by handing me over to that school-acquaintance of yours? I shall thank you not to play any more tricks of the sort with me, or I shall punish you by never letting you ride my pony again as long as you live. There have I been on duty for the last half hour, and all I have learned at the end of it is, that the young lady knows a little German, but no Italian, that she doesn't draw, and that she does play."

"Yes, that she certainly does," replied Dora, laughing, "and uncommonly well too; I dare say you will hear her by and by. Poor thing! she looked so stupid by herself in that corner."

"No reason why you should make a victim of me," replied her cousin; "however, I shall be on my guard for the future; you won't hand me over to a young lady of that description quite so easily another time."

Edith could not hear the words of this conversation, but her eyes had followed Captain Granville as he rejoined his cousin Dora. She had seen them both look towards her as they spoke. She had remarked Captain Granville's manner, had heard Dora's laugh, and if she had overheard every word that they had said to each other, she could not have felt more certain than she did now that they were speaking of her, and not only speaking of her, but laughing at her.

Was this then the pleasure which Mrs. Graham's eagerly-desired party was to bring her? It would have been a relief to Edith at that moment to have sat down and cried, but Mrs. Graham was begging her for the second time to come to the piano.

"We are going to have some music, and Georgina wants you to accompany her in that beautiful duet."

At the moment Edith felt inclined to say that she "could not play to-night, she was not well, it was impossible," but before she had resolved this idea into words, it was superseded by another.

Dora had pitied her and despised her. She had seen it in her contemptuous manner, and in her most unkind words of pretended kindness. Captain Granville had thought her a dull, stupid school-girl. They had laughed at her together.

But Captain Granville had professed himself passionately fond of music, and it was in Edith's power to prove that if she were superior to Dora in nothing else, she was vastly her superior in the art of music. Her cousin had said that Dora's music was his great delight now that she was staying with them in the country. It would not be Edith's fault if she did not make Dora's powers in this way appear very small indeed, when brought into comparison with her own.

She accompanied Mrs. Graham to the piano, willingly undertook the most difficult part, which Lady Georgina felt afraid of appropriating before so large a party, and per-

formed it with such success that, when they rose from the piano, there was a very sincere murmur of applause throughout the room.

They were asked to play again, but Lady Georgina suggested that Edith should perform alone. Edith's eyes fell upon Dora Milford and Captain Granville standing close to the piano, evidently surprised at the performance he had just listened to, and all her shyness disappeared.

She took her seat again at the piano, and this time played so brilliantly that, as she did so, the conversation in the room, which at first had subsided into a low whisper, deadened into complete silence, and when she again rose from the piano, every one was asking who she was, and Captain Granville, leaving Dora's side, came forward to say that "she had good reason to say she could play, he had not heard such a performer in private life for years."

He seemed inclined to enter into conversation on the subject of music, and asked several questions about different composers and pieces of music which were favourites of his own. But Edith's feelings were not to be so easily appeased. She answered his questions now quite as shortly as she had done before, and saying she must speak to Lady Georgina, passed on.

As she did so, she heard Captain Granville ask his cousin Dora when she would learn to play like that, and for the moment her triumph was complete. But it was but for the moment. Not half an hour afterwards Edith, tired of talk-

public, Georgina does not enjoy having Edith here, indeed it puts her quite out of temper. She did not wish me to ask her to-night. And I don't much think I should, only I had set my heart on having the little one. She is such a *mignonne*, she is an ornament to any room, and I am really excessively fond of her. Beauty, you know, was always rather a snare to me. I can't resist beautiful things, or beautiful people when I see them. And Alice Cornwall is the loveliest little thing you can see anywhere."

"Indeed!" said the lady. "I don't think the sister at all pretty—fine eyes and hair, but nothing more."

"Oh, they are not in the least alike," replied Mrs. Graham. "You never would take them for sisters. Edith is like her father. You must have seen him."

"Yes," the lady replied, "I met them both at Malta, a few months after their marriage. I remember his wife perfectly. She was not a person whom one could easily forget. I remember thinking her the loveliest young creature I had ever seen in my life."

"And her second daughter is the image of her," said Mrs. Graham, warmly; "she is quite bewitching, lovely in person, and so perfectly unaffected and genuine. Edith is a different girl altogether. She is far less good-tempered, and is somewhat proud and conceited."

"Then she is not very unlike our niece Georgina," returned the other lady; "really, Sophia, she has an uncommonly good opinion of herself, and I don't think

it has improved her to have been so long in London. She has gone out too much, and been too much made of."

And the two ladies ceased to think any more about Edith, and entered into an animated conversation about their niece, Lady Georgina Ashton.

Edith listened no longer. Several times during the course of the evening she had been ready to cry from vexation and ill-humour. But now her feelings were of a deeper nature. She was completely overcome by them. All wish or power to move seemed to have left her, and although her head ached painfully, and the cold wind from the open door was blowing most disagreeably upon her, she sat just where she was for nearly an hour, and would probably have sat there longer still, if the guests had not gradually begun to leave the room, until at length there were so few left in it, that Edith saw she was no longer safe from observation where she was, and dreading lest Mrs. Graham should discover that she had been a listener to her conversation with her sister-in-law, she left her seat, and came forward into the room.

"How tired you look!" Lady Georgina remarked. "Who have you been talking to?"

"Nobody," said Edith, shortly. "The people seem nearly all gone. I thought I would go to my room."

She spoke so coldly that Lady Georgina was struck by the alteration in her manner, and asked if she were ill.

"No," said Edith, "at least my head aches, and I shall be glad to be in bed."

She looked for Mrs. Graham, but she was engaged in wishing her guests good-night, and thankful to have an excuse for not speaking to her, Edith desired Lady Georgina to say that she had a headache, and could not remain up longer, and went to the room which had been prepared for her.

## CHAPTER XIV.

"Hast thou kept thy faith with the faithful dead  
Whose place of rest is nigh?  
With the father's blessing o'er thee shed?  
With the mother's trusting eye?"—MRS. HEMANS.

EDITH shut and locked her door, and then, throwing herself into the first chair which came in her way, she gave vent to her feelings in a burst of passionate tears.

This, then, was the happiness which Mrs. Graham's eagerly-desired party had brought her!—this the pleasure which she had so fondly anticipated—this the triumph which she had so much coveted! To hear from the lips of those whom she imagined her most devoted friends, that they cared nothing at all about her except so far as she ministered to their own selfish ends. To discover that she was looked upon by them as a proud, disagreeable, ill-tempered girl, and that, although they had pressed her to come, in their hearts they would much rather she had stayed away.

This, then, was the friendship of the world, at least it was Edith's first experience of it, and the effect was to make her feel inclined to hate the world, and everybody in it. As



for Mrs. Graham and Lady Georgina Ashton, she made a vow at the moment never to speak to either of them again. She would only wait until morning came to leave the house and return to St. John's Wood, and in her mind she framed the sentences of the scornful, indignant letter which she intended to write to her friends, telling them of the discovery she had made of their treachery and deceit.

These were Edith's first feelings and resolutions as she sat in her room that night, with the hot tears falling from her burning eyes.

But when this burst of angry passion had subsided, Edith remembered that she could not break openly with her friends, and expose their insincerity and deceitfulness, without at the same time avowing that she had lent a ready ear to the confidential conversation of Mrs. Graham with her sister-in-law, and humiliating herself before Dora Milford and others in a way which would be anything but agreeable to her feelings.

So that Edith resigned the idea of coming to an open breach with Mrs. Graham and Lady Georgina, and resolved, instead, that she would never be on anything like friendly terms with either of them again, and would withdraw from their society before they shook her off from it, which no doubt they would be very glad to find an opportunity of doing. And having come to this resolution, Edith went to bed.

But it was in vain that she strove to sleep. Although every limb ached with weariness, and her strained eye-balls were so painful that she pressed her hot hand heavily upon

them in order to relieve them by a forced rest, all her endeavours to find relief in sleep were fruitless. Hour after hour passed, and Edith still lay tossing on her uneasy pillow. Images of the gaily-attired figures, which had been passing to and fro before her eyes all the evening, rose again before them now, as she strove to close them in sleep, while upon her ear seemed to fall continually the sound of the music and singing, and the ceaseless hum of conversation.

At length, weary with vainly endeavouring to rest, Edith rose from the bed, and, taking a book, tried to read, but the words swam before her eyes. She felt sick and giddy, and throwing aside the book, she lay down upon the sofa, and longed for the morning.

Then it was that the thought of Alice came into her mind, and brought with it the remembrance of what Mrs. Graham had said of her that evening. She had not spoken unkind words of Alice. She had praised her in unqualified terms, had called her fascinating, lovely, delightful, and had expressed genuine regret at her not being present at the party.

It was very hard, Edith thought, that she, who had so longed to please, and so diligently sought to ingratiate herself in Mrs. Graham's and Lady Georgina's favour, should be so slightly and unkindly treated, while Alice, the gentle, unobtrusive little Alice, who never seemed to court any one's notice or praise, was thus, without seeking for it, winning for herself the admiration of all who saw her.

Edith wondered why this should be, and as she did so, a

text of Scripture came into her mind, in which something was said about he that exalteth himself being abased, and he that humbleth himself being exalted. That text supplied the answer to the question in Edith's troubled mind; she felt more miserable than ever, and wished with all her heart that Mrs. Graham had never returned from abroad, and that neither she nor Lady Georgina had ever come across her path to lead her astray, and bring her into all this trouble and misery.

It was all their fault, Edith thought; if it had not been for them, she would have been contented to go on in her former quiet way at school; it was they who had made her discontented and ambitious, and who had led her to seek to gratify her pride and ambition by wrong and dangerous means.

But then, again, Edith remembered Alice. The same people had come across Alice's path. The same temptations had been thrown in Alice's way. Yet Alice had stood firm, while she had fallen.

Who, that knew those two sisters, would have imagined that the timid little Alice, with her gentle voice and hesitating manner, which always seemed to tell of her self-distrust and reliance upon others, would have been able to stand firm, where Edith, so confident in manner, so firm and decided in expression, had given way.

Perhaps the watchful mother who left them both three years before, may have foreseen how it would prove, for on the morning of the day on which she died, she had called

each of them to her bed-side, and after a few tender words of counsel had said to Edith :

“ You will remember, Edith dear, that all our strength is only weakness, utter weakness, and that if we trust to it, we must surely fall.”

While to Alice she had said : “ And my darling Alice will remember that her mother bid her never to faint, nor grow weary, but always to persevere, trusting her own weakness to Him who is power and strength, and who promises to all those who trust in Him, that in due season they shall reap, if they faint not.”

Edith remembered these words now. In the dreary loneliness of that night's watching that last day of her mother's life came back upon her recollection with a vividness that almost frightened her. She remembered how her mother had looked,—the earnest expression of her face, the firm though low voice in which she had spoken, and how she and Alice had afterwards knelt at her bed-side, and, with many tears, promised that they would never forget, but always remember.

How had that promise been kept? Alice had remembered, but she had forgotten, and now that she would undo the past, it seemed impossible to attempt amendment. She could not return into the right path without acknowledging how far she had wandered from it. There could be no repentance without confession. And from the thought of confession Edith's spirit shrank as from a thing impossible.

Never to deceive again—never to do anything of which

her father would disapprove—entirely to give up Lady Georgina and her worldly ways, and return to the companionship of her neglected sister,—all this Edith felt she could do, and willingly would do to regain peace of conscience, and feel that she might once more take her place amongst the honourable and upright. But to confess that she had deceived, to subject herself to the just contempt of such people as Dora Milford and Marion Carter, to come down from the high position which she had always held in the school, this Edith felt she could not do. As she had begun, so she must go on. Her only hope was that Dora Milford would not say anything about the scarlet fever business. But even if she did mention it, Edith was determined that nothing should make her reveal the fact of her having received and destroyed Mrs. Graham's note.

As she came to this resolution, all sorts of strange remembrances forced themselves upon her mind, as though to prevent her from making it. Things heard and learnt in early childhood, and not thought of for years, rushed into her memory without any effort of her own. She remembered the large Bible picture which hung upon the nursery wall in the old home at Alderley, long before they went to Wolverton. Edith had never seen the picture since, and was not conscious that she had ever even thought of it, but it came before her, just as it used to stand in its old corner in the nursery, with the light from the window shining full upon it, and bringing prominently forward the two principal figures in it—that of the guilty Ananias, struck to the earth

with a lie upon his lips, whilst the holy apostle stood beside him, and around were the figures of many upon whom great fear had fallen.

Edith remembered every line in this picture now, and perhaps it was the result of association which at the same moment brought another scene of early childhood vividly before her mind. One of the children had told a falsehood. She could not recollect now whether it were Alice or herself, but she well remembered her mother's taking them both into her own room, and reading to them the story of Gehazi, who, for the sake of the talents of silver and the changes of garments which he coveted, deceived his master Elisha, and how God sent upon him so fearful a punishment, that, as Edith remembered the story, she trembled lest at that moment some such dreadful judgment might be impending over her, and almost she resolved to confess the whole of her conduct.

In such troubled thoughts as these, Edith spent the weary night, once or twice falling asleep as she lay on the sofa, with her hands pressed upon her forehead, but her sleep never lasted for more than a few minutes, and then with a frightened start she would wake again to the full consciousness of all that had happened that evening. It was not surprising that, when the maid called her in the morning, and Edith unlocked the door to admit her, she was so much shocked by her haggard appearance that she reported to her mistress that "she had never seen any one look so ill as Miss

Cornewall, she could not look worse if she had been up all night."

Mrs. Graham went to her at once, and begged her to remain in bed and rest, and she would send a message to St. John's Wood to tell Miss Clifton that she was not well, and could not return that day.

But Edith declined the offer so decidedly, and with such coldness, that Mrs. Graham was led to wonder, as Lady Georgina had done the night before, what change could have come over Edith Cornewall.

"She was quite well," she said, "only her head still ached, she would be much better at home, all she wished was to return there at once."

Mrs. Graham said she would drive her to St. John's Wood in the afternoon, but Edith declined this offer also with the coldest of thanks, and begged that "the man-servant might be allowed to order a cab for her immediately after breakfast."

"A most extraordinary girl!" exclaimed Mrs. Graham to her niece, as she gave her the account of her interview with Edith, "something must have annoyed her, though what I can't imagine. She certainly has a shocking temper, it was only yesterday I was saying so to Lady Harcourt; have you been doing anything to vex her?"

"Not that I know of," replied Lady Georgina, "but she is so proud, I dare say she has taken offence at something, although none was meant."

"She is not amiable," said Mrs. Graham,—“after all

your kindness to her too ; there really seems no such thing as gratitude in the world."

"Oh, for the matter of that," said Lady Georgina, honestly, "I don't think she has very much to be grateful to me for. I know I have made a good deal of her, but it has been for the sake of her music. I never should have got on as I have done if I had not had her to practise with."

"And so it's a good thing for you that she did not take it into her head to be offended until just as we are leaving town, and don't require her services any more."

And with one of her clear silvery laughs, Mrs. Graham went down to breakfast in perfect good temper herself, and caring very little whether Edith were in a bad temper or not.

"You are quite worn out, Edith," Lady Georgina remarked to her during breakfast, "you evidently are not accustomed to late hours and hot rooms, or have you been lying awake all night, thinking about the good lady who died of scarlet fever, and expecting every moment to see her ghost?"

"Died!" said Edith, startled at the word, though she scarcely knew why, "did she die?"

"Yes, to be sure. Though really I don't think it makes much difference whether she died or not, as far as the house is concerned. I suppose there would have been the same fear of the infection remaining, if she had recovered, so you



need not be more frightened about it now than you were before."

"I am not at all frightened about the infection, thank you," Edith replied, haughtily. Nor was she.

But the idea of some one having so lately died in that very house was a startling one. She wondered in which of the rooms she had died, perhaps in the very room where she had been lying awake nearly all night. She was glad she had not known it then, for it would have made her feel still more gloomy and miserable than she had done. She wished she did not know it now, for, somehow or other, she could not help thinking of it. The idea seemed to haunt her. She finished her breakfast in perfect silence, her head aching miserably, and the one thought always before her of the lady who had so recently left that house, not, as Edith was now doing, in health and strength, but to be carried to the last long home from which there could be no return.

The question arose in Edith's mind as to how it might be with her if she were to be thus summoned suddenly away, and though she did not attempt to answer it, on the contrary, she strove to drive it from her thoughts, it was still troubling them when, after a silent breakfast, Mrs. Graham rang to have the things removed, and desired the servant to send for a cab for Miss Cornewall.

## CHAPTER XV.

"Oh, though oft depressed and lonely,  
All my fears are laid aside,  
If I but remember only  
Such as these have lived and died."

LONGFELLOW.

EDITH returned home, and Alice's first words, as she welcomed her sister with a loving kiss, were, "How tired you look, Edith dear, I am sure you have not had any sleep last night."

"No," said Edith, "I have not, and my head aches terribly in consequence. I think I must go and lie down. Where is Miss Clifton?"

"In the school-room with Marion and Minnie, hearing them read French. I can go to her, and tell her you have come, and that you don't feel well. Come up-stairs and lie down on your bed, and, as soon as I have made you comfortable, I will go and tell her."

Edith did as her sister wished, and Alice drew the curtains across the window so as to shade the light from her eyes, and brought her some Eau de Cologne to bathe her forehead, but Edith received all her sister's attentions in

such a distracted manner, that Alice thought there must be something more the matter with her than a simple head-ache, and she asked, "Are you sure you are not ill, Edith, you don't seem a bit like yourself to-day? You often have a head-ache, but then you don't look as you do now. I'm sure you are ill, or perhaps something has gone wrong, and you are vexed; if so, do tell me, Edith dear, for I can't bear to see you look so miserable; was it a pleasant party?"

"Pleasant!" exclaimed Edith bitterly, "no, it was horrible; but don't talk to me about it, Alice."

"Oh, but do tell me," said Alice, entreatingly, for she saw plainly now that there was something on Edith's mind, and concluded, rightly enough, that she would be all the better if she were to tell it out to her; "if it is anything that I can help in, you know I should be so glad. I thought you were going to have such a happy time at Mrs. Graham's, with your dear friend Lady Georgina."

"Don't call her my dear friend," interrupted Edith, "I hate her."

"Hate Lady Georgina!" exclaimed Alice, looking, as indeed she felt, quite aghast at such an unexpected announcement of the change which had taken place in her sister's feelings, "but what has she done? It must be something very bad."

"Don't ask me," replied Edith, "and don't talk about it, I couldn't talk to any one about it, not even to you. I will only just tell you this, Alice, and you need not ask me

any more, that Lady Georgina and Mrs. Graham are, both of them, deceitful, hypocritical, insincere, and untrue, and that I don't ever wish to see either of them again. And now go away, and leave me alone,—if you only knew how my head aches. Miss Clifton will be angry if you don't go and tell her I am here, do go."

And Alice went. But she could not have remained long away, and she was thankful to have an excuse for returning at once in Miss Clifton's desiring her to tell Edith to stay quiet, and she would come and see her almost immediately,

"I wish she wouldn't!" exclaimed Edith, as Alice gave her the message. "I don't want to be bothered, and asked all sorts of questions. I only want to be left alone. You can go, Alice."

"No, indeed, Edith, I can't go," replied Alice; "you are ill, I am sure, and I can see that you are unhappy. I wish you would tell me what makes you so, and all about it, for then I would try and comfort you, but even if you won't you must let me stop with you and nurse you, indeed you must,—you will make me miserable if you don't; you know, Edith, we used to tell each other everything. We never had any secrets together."

Alice's eyes were full of tears. Her voice was sad and pleading, and Edith was touched by it. For a few seconds she allowed her sister to stand by her bed-side without speaking, and she said, "Alice, I wish, yes I wish, with all my heart, that I were like you."

Three months before, if Edith had made such a speech, Alice would have replied,

“ Oh, Edith, don't say that, for you know you are a great deal better.”

But now she could not say so. Humble as she was, and keenly alive to her own numerous failings and short-comings, her eyes had been opened lately to see that Edith was gradually wandering further and further from the right path, while she felt that, difficult as it sometimes was for her to walk in it, unsteady as her footsteps often were, they were upheld by a power greater than her own, and that that power had enabled her to keep still in the one only safe road. So that when Edith startled her by so unexpected a speech—for indeed it was the very last that Alice had ever expected to hear from her—the only answer she made was by kneeling down at her sister's side, and taking Edith's burning hand in both her own, she said in a low, earnest, humble voice,—

“ Don't wish that, Edith darling, we are both alike weak and sinful. It is very hard for either of us to do right, but if we might only help each other, I think it would be happier for us both.”

And Alice looked at Edith with an earnest expression which seemed to beg for sympathy.

But Edith turned away her face. Alice thought she was offended, but it was not so, only she could not bear to look upon Alice's innocent, child-like countenance.

She did not answer, and Alice rose from her knees, and

was about to leave the room, when Edith called her again to her bed-side, and said,—

“Alice, don’t ask me to tell you more about it, for I can’t. But I want to say just this, that I know I have been unkind to you in leaving you so much for Lady Georgina, and I am sorry for it. Dawson told me one day you were jealous of her. You need never be again, for I love you very much, and I don’t love her at all. And, Alice, I think you are very good, better than I am, and much more fit to be confirmed, but I mean now to be different. I am ill now, my head aches so badly, but to-morrow I shall be quite well, and then I mean to begin all over again. So now go, Alice dear. There is Miss Clifton coming, and I don’t want her to think that I am ill. I shall be quite well to-morrow.”

To-morrow came, and the next day, and several days, and yet Edith neither felt nor looked quite well, her head ached constantly, she could not sleep at night, and had but little appetite. Miss Clifton noticed her heavy eyes and pale cheeks, and said that she was sure she was not feeling well, but Edith would not allow that there was anything the matter; and certainly if activity and energy were any proofs of health, she could not be considered very ill, for never before had Edith been more diligent at her studies than she was now.

Since her intimacy with Lady Georgina had become so great, she had seemed to care much less than formerly for her studies. Music had been the great source of interest to herself and her friend, and the strongest tie between them,

and the chief part of her time had of late been devoted to the piano, often to the neglect of other things. But now she returned to all her former occupations with renewed vigour, and Alice, who noticed the great change in her sister's conduct, was delighting herself with the thought of the pleasure it would give Mrs. Clifton to see it, although at the same time she was feeling uneasy lest Edith should be overtasking her strength by working so hard when every one was observing how ill she was looking.

"I can't make Edith out," she said to Minnie Carpenter one morning, after leaving her sister intent upon a German translation, "she seems so poorly, and yet she goes on at her studies, and won't allow herself any rest, though Miss Clifton is always telling her that she does a great deal too much, and almost insists upon her not being always either reading or writing."

"It's something quite new, too," answered Minnie, "or rather it seems a sudden going back to her old ways, for you know, Alice, Edith used to be always at her books when first you came."

"Yes, I know she was," said Alice, "but she was trying for the prize with Dora then, and that was a motive for working. But she gave it all up afterwards. And since she has been so intimate with Lady Georgina, she has not seemed to care nearly so much for books, almost all her spare time has been given to music."

"And now she scarcely ever touches the piano," interrupted Minnie. "I don't think she has practised once since

she came back from that visit to Mrs. Graham's, and that was nearly a week ago."

"No, I know she hasn't," replied Alice, "and I can't make it out, unless it is that she does not care so much for practising alone."

"She used always to practise with Lady Georgina," said Minnie, "I don't think she ever came back from Mrs. Graham's without bringing home some new piece of music to learn. But this time I have not heard her mention Lady Georgina's name, and when I said something about her, she did not even answer,—have they quarrelled?"

"I don't know," replied Alice, "Edith has not told me, but I am afraid there must be something between them. I don't think Edith loves her any more."

"But why should you be afraid of that?" asked Minnie, quickly; "I should have thought it would have made you very glad. I thought you did not like their friendship. It used to make you jealous. If I were you, I should be delighted that they had quarrelled."

"Oh no, Minnie, you wouldn't. Perhaps just at first you might feel a little glad. I know it was very wicked, and I was sorry for it afterwards, but when first Edith told me that Lady Georgina would never be her friend again, I could not help feeling pleased. It made me feel that perhaps I should come back now to the old place I used to have in Edith's heart, when she and I were children, and had only each other to love."

"But Edith was not always kind to you then," said Min-



nie. "I thought you said she used to leave you a great deal alone, and you were often lonely."

"Yes," said Alice, "I know she did, and I was very unhappy about it often, but not nearly so unhappy as I have been lately, since Lady Georgina and Edith have been such great friends. I think, Minnie, this has been the unhappiest time of all my life."

"Oh, Alice!" exclaimed Minnie.

For she remembered that Alice had known what it was to lose a mother, and the agony which it had given her to part with hers was still too fresh in her recollection for her to think that any other trial could be compared with it.

Alice saw the expression of her face, and understood what she was thinking of.

"You don't understand me, Minnie," she said. "I don't mean that it has been the same sort of unhappiness that it was when dear mamma died. Nothing can be like that. But that was such a different trial, and though it was much worse in one way, a very great deal worse, still in many ways it was easier to bear. It seemed to come straight from God, and that was one thing that made it easier."

"But all trials come from God," said Minnie; "you know, Alice, that was just what you told Marion, the day she was so unhappy because her cousins had the hooping-cough, and she was not allowed to go and see them. Marion told me that you had said that all the little troubles of life came from God just as well as the great."

"Did I say so?" said Alice, "I dare say I did, for I

know it's true. But it's much easier to say a thing, and to see it too when other people are concerned, than to feel it in one's own case. When our great sorrow came, and dear mamma died, it seemed all God's doing, and one could not blame anybody, or complain of anybody. But when Edith left off caring about me, and gave up all her time and thoughts to Lady Georgina, then it seemed as if the trial was of their making, and I blamed Edith and complained of Lady Georgina."

"And almost hated them, I should think," remarked Minnie, in her decided manner.

"Not Edith. I never could hate Edith. She is my own sister, and I have loved her so much. And when one has once really loved a person very much, I don't think one could ever hate them, at least I am sure I couldn't."

"But Lady Georgina," said Minnie, "you hated her."

Alice could not help smiling at the decided tone in which Minnie spoke, although the subject was so grave, and one on which she felt so seriously.

"Hate is such a strong word, Minnie," she said. "I should be very sorry to think that I had really hated any one. You know the Bible says it is just like murder."

"Yes," said Minnie, "we learnt it the other day in the Epistle of St. John. But of course it does not mean that it is as bad."

"Doesn't it?" said Alice, "then what does it mean?"

Minnie looked a little puzzled.

"Oh, I don't know," she said, "I suppose it means that

it's very wicked to hate any one, and that it's something like murder. But it can't really mean that everybody who hates another is a murderer, because you know, Alice, so many people in the world hate other people,—there's Dora Milford, she hates Edith, and—”

“Stop, stop, Minnie,” Alice interrupted, “don't let us talk about people, you're so fond always of bringing in persons' names, and it's such a bad way.”

“Well,” said Minnie, “I know you're right, so we won't mention anybody in particular, but you know, Alice, there are a great many people in the world who hate other people, and I'm sure you don't look upon them all as murderers.”

“No,” said Alice, “and it would be very wrong for us to say they were, for we are not to judge them. But you may be sure, Minnie, that everybody that hates another is a murderer in God's eyes.”

“O Alice, how can you say so?” exclaimed Minnie.

“Because the Bible says so, and whatever the Bible says must be true, whether it seems so to us or not.”

“But perhaps it does not mean quite that,” persisted Minnie,—who, conscious of having herself felt something very like positive hatred in her heart towards more than one person, could not so easily acknowledge that she had been guilty of so great a sin as St. John's words would declare her to be,—“perhaps, Alice, it does not mean quite that.”

But Alice's tone was very grave as she answered,

“Oh, Minnie dear, you make me wish so often that

mamma were here to talk to you, and answer all your questions. I know I can't do so properly. I can only answer them at all by trying to remember what dear mamma used to say to us. But I remember she used to be so particular about this very thing, and always tried to make us feel that we were to believe just what the Bible said.

"I recollect one night, when Edith had been puzzling over the meaning of something,—for Edith was always fond of thinking about things,—she came to mamma, and showed her a verse in the Bible, and asked her how that could be, and I thought mamma was going to explain, and came to listen, for mamma used often to explain verses to us, and I always liked so much to hear her. But that day she took the Bible, and read the verse, and then she shut it, and laid it on the table, and said so gravely, 'You can't understand that, Edith, and I can't explain it to you. But we know it is so, because God says so. Whatever God says, must be. And when we think how great God's mind is, and how very small our minds are in comparison, it is not wonderful that there should be some things in God's word which we cannot understand, and which we are therefore called on to believe without understanding.' I remember too she said that we believed many things that she and papa told us which we could not in the least understand now, on account of our being so young and ignorant, and that God required us to put the same sort of faith in Him, because *He* says it, and we know that He is Truth itself. But that is different from what you were talking about."

"Yes," said Minnie, "I only meant that perhaps the Bible does not mean that there is no difference between one who hates and one who murders. It seems to me that there is such a very great difference."

"And so it does to me," Alice replied, "but I know why that is. Mamma used often to talk to us about that too. It is because we have such different thoughts altogether about sin from what God has. We look at people's actions, and some actions seem so much worse than others. But God looks at people's hearts, and He sees that it is the same sin that makes one person do a little wickedness, and another person do a very great wickedness. Mamma used to say that the effects of the sin are different, but that the sin itself is just the same."

"Yes," said Minnie, "I dare say it is, but then there must be more of the sin in one heart than in the other. You won't tell me, Alice, that the child that steals an apple has as much dishonesty in his heart, as that man Miss Clifton was talking about last night, who forged a paper, and stole all that money, and ruined I don't know how many people."

Alice did not answer, and when Minnie looked at her as if to inquire the reason why, she was surprised to see the large tears coursing each other down her cheeks.

"Alice, dear," she said, "what is the matter? why should you cry? there is nothing in what I said to vex you."

"No, nothing," Alice replied, "only this makes me think

so very much about mamma, for it was the thing we talked of most frequently. I was just like you, Minnie. I never could believe that we are all alike. And mamma used to tell me so often, so very, very often, that in God's eyes there is no such thing as little sin, or great sin, but that he hates all sin. I could not understand it then. I can't quite understand it now. But I begin to do so more, and every day I hope I shall more and more, because I know until I really do see sin as God sees it, I never shall see it right. And until we see what sin is, you know, Minnie, we can't love the Saviour as we ought."

Both the girls were silent. Minnie was thinking over all Alice had said, and the words were sinking down deep, and taking strong root in the soil which had been so long preparing to receive them. Alice was dwelling in her heart upon a scene which Minnie's words had recalled forcibly to her memory, but which she could not summon courage to speak of, even to her,—a day long gone by now, when she had grieved her mother by her harsh judgment of a little friend who had been to see them. Edith and she had commented strongly on her bad behaviour, and were both rejoicing in the feeling of their own superiority, and their mother had talked long to them that night, striving to make them understand that although in man's eyes one may differ vastly from another, in the eyes of God all alike have sinned, and come short of His glory.

Alice had been the most difficult to convince, or perhaps she had been the readiest in expressing her feelings, for it

had always been her way to speak freely to that dear mother of all that was passing in her mind, and she remembered that as her mother bent over her bed to kiss her, she had said in a voice of such earnestness that she had never forgotten it,—

“ May God’s Holy Spirit show my little girl so much of the sinfulness of her own heart that she may never need to be allowed to fall into some great sin, or to teach her that the seed of every evil is within her, but that she may feel her own sinfulness, and cling to Him who can alone save her from its power.”

Those words had made so deep an impression on Alice’s mind, that ever afterwards she had added them to her daily prayers. They had not been addressed to Edith—for Edith had not been so unreserved in speaking of her own feelings, and although in her heart she had a far more exalted opinion of herself than Alice, she had not allowed it to become evident—but she had heard her mother’s words, although it never entered her mind to apply them to herself.

They were not added to Edith’s prayers, or treasured in Edith’s memory, or it might never have fallen to her lot to be left as she had been to feel by bitter experience how low those may fall who trust to their own strength to enable them to walk uprightly.

“ It is time to go in,” were Alice’s first words after the silence that had followed upon her last remark. “ What a long talk we have had ! and how we have gone from one

thing to another! I really don't know what we began with."

"Oh, about your being jealous of Lady Georgina; and whether you were glad or not that they had quarrelled."

"Oh yes, I remember," said Alice. "We did not settle the question, and we certainly shall not have time to do so now."

"We must keep it for another of our long talks. I do so enjoy talking to you, Alice; I have never had any one to talk to since papa died."

"But you might have," said Alice; "Mrs. Clifton is so kind and good, I wonder you are afraid of talking to her."

"I don't think I am exactly afraid," said Minnie, "but I never felt as if I could talk to any one until you came. The very first evening I saw you, I was not afraid of speaking to you. I think it was your deep mourning dress that made me feel that you could understand something of what I was feeling. But I don't suppose we should ever have been so intimate if it had not been for Lady Georgina's great friendship with Edith, because that has left you so much alone, and given you time for me, so that after all I ought not to say anything against her, for she has done me nothing but good."

"And me too, I am sure," said Alice.

"You!" exclaimed Minnie, "well I don't see how exactly. I think she has done you nothing but harm, coming between you and Edith, and making you so unhappy."



"Oh," said Alice, lightly, "you know it does us good to be made unhappy sometimes."

And then she added more gravely, "and I am a great deal happier now than if I had not been unhappy."

Minnie looked as if she did not quite understand.

"I mean," said Alice, "that if Edith and I had never been separated, I might not feel so much how great a blessing it is for us to be united. I never knew before how much I loved her, or how necessary she was to me. And I think too that Edith loves me better than she did before. Listen, Minnie, I think that is her voice calling me now."

The girls listened, and could hear Edith's voice calling her sister.

"Edith would not have been looking for me three months ago," Alice thought, as she hastened to meet her.

"Where have you been, Alice!" she exclaimed. "We have been looking for you everywhere. Mrs. Clifton has come."

"Come!" exclaimed Minnie, while Alice uttered an exclamation of joyful surprise.

"Yes," said Edith, "but she is very sad, and looks ill. Her brother died yesterday."

"And she came home to-day?—before the funeral?"

"Yes," said Edith. "I can't think why. She seemed as if she had been anxious about some of us, for she asked so quickly whether we were all well, and almost before she had spoken to Miss Clifton, asked where you and Minnie were, in such an eager manner, just as if she had expected

to hear some bad news. I looked all over the house for you, and then Mrs. Clifton sent me to see if you were in the garden. Make haste in, for Mrs. Clifton wishes to see you before she goes to her room to take off her things."

But there was no need to hurry Alice. Before Edith had finished speaking, she had run across the garden, and into the house, and told Mrs. Clifton, as she received her tender embrace, how very, very glad she was she had come back.

That evening was one which was long remembered by many of that little party, and by Alice Cornewall it was one which could never be forgotten. It was spent in the library, all the girls gathering round Mrs. Clifton, while she told them many particulars concerning the last days of her brother, one of God's true servants, who had long served faithfully in his vineyard, and had now gone to receive the heavenly reward.

Edith, Alice, and Minnie all felt the truest sympathy as Mrs. Clifton spoke of the grief it would be to his wife and daughters to leave the happy home where they had lived for so long, and Alice said that "it was enough to break their hearts, it was bad enough to leave Wolverton, where they had been so happy for five years, it must be dreadful to leave the only home they have ever known."

"It will be a great trial," said Mrs. Clifton, "but it will not quite break their hearts, Alice, as you say. We must hope there are no such things as broken hearts amongst God's own people, at least not in the sense of the word that

you would signify. You remember that beautiful verse where we are told that a part of the Saviour's special office is to bind up the broken-hearted, and though this especially refers to those who are broken-hearted on account of sin, we know that Jesus is always near to comfort His people in all their sorrows."

And then she told them that she hoped her sister and her two daughters would soon come to stay with her, adding,—

"It will be a great comfort to me to have my sister with me, and I trust it will greatly cheer my nieces to be in the society of so many young people of their own age—some of you will especially feel for them, and I hope be able to comfort them with the same comfort which has comforted your own hearts in like grief. We know how to sympathize with others in sorrows which we have ourselves suffered."

And Mrs. Clifton's eyes were directed to Alice and Edith Cornewall, and little Minnie Carpenter. The expression of Alice's face was all sympathy, for she was already feeling how much she should like to be a comfort to Mrs. Clifton's sorrowing nieces, and Minnie looked up with tears in her eyes, and the thought in her mind that although they had lost their father, their mother still was spared to them,—they were not like her,—they had not lost both.

But Edith did not move or speak, and when Mrs. Clifton looked at her again, she saw that her eyes were heavy, and her face flushed, and there was an expression of pain upon her countenance.

"Edith, my dear," she asked, anxiously, "you are ill."

"Yes, rather, I think; my head aches so dreadfully," Edith answered; and when, in compliance with Mrs. Clifton's request that she would at once go to bed, she rose from her seat, her knees trembled so much, and her head was so dizzy, that she could scarcely walk.

## CHAPTER XVI.

" Her sister too  
Did weep and sorrow comfortless, and I  
Too wept, though not to weeping given, and all  
Within the house was dolorous and sad."

POLLOCK.

A FORTNIGHT later, and the whole aspect of Mrs. Clifton's cheerful little household was entirely changed. Silence now reigned throughout the house, which had been hitherto cheered by the constant sound of young and merry voices, whilst along the passages and through the rooms passed continually the figures, not of merry girls running with eager steps and bright faces in pursuit of some fresh amusement or occupation, but of anxious watchers treading with slow and noiseless step, lest any sound of theirs should disturb those who lay upon the bed of sickness.

At this moment the house was so quiet that a stranger entering might have fancied it deserted, for, save the ticking of the old clock which stood upon the stairs, not a sound was to be heard, and the sitting-rooms below seemed all abandoned.

The drawing-room was empty, the flowers in the vases,

which it was the girls' delight to arrange each day for Mrs. Clifton, were withered, and the piano had not been touched for days. There were no signs of open books or of work in the library. All looked dull and neglected.

But whilst not a soul could be seen or heard below, in the rooms above were many active fingers, and earnest faces. In one room were Marion and Julia Carter, making their last preparations for a journey, and talking together very eagerly, yet in such low restrained voices that it was not possible they could be heard beyond.

"I wish we could have known what the doctor said before we left," said Julia. "Dawson says so much may depend upon this sleep."

"But we shan't know," replied Marion. "Dr. Grantley is not to come again till this evening, and by that time we shall be far away from here. We can't hear until the day after to-morrow. It makes me wish we were not going; I had rather stay here, and have the scarlet fever, than go away, and have to bear all this anxiety. It's only for Alice that I care so much. If it were not for her, I should not be so miserable. But oh, Julia, I don't know what I should do if Alice were to die."

And laying down the little travelling bag which she was holding in her hand, and seeming to fill mechanically with the things which her sister was handing to her one by one, Marion Carter leant her head against the bed, and sobbed as though her heart would break.

"Oh don't cry like that, Marion, please don't!" her

sister exclaimed. "I dare say Alice will get quite well, you know Dawson longed so much for her to sleep. I heard her telling Miss Clifton that the doctor had said in such a grave way, 'If we could only get her to sleep,' as if everything depended upon that. And now that she has gone to sleep, I dare say she will wake up quite well, I mean at least quite out of danger."

"Oh no, she won't," Marion answered, vehemently, "I know she will die. I feel quite sure of it. I thought so the moment she was taken ill, and when we heard that she was delirious, and that the doctor had very little hope, I felt that it was all coming just as I knew it would, and that I should never, never see her again."

"O Marion," Julia interrupted, "it's very wrong to talk like that; how could you know what was going to happen, and how can you tell whether Alice will recover or not?"

"Because I feel it," Marion replied, "she's too good to live. She isn't a bit like you, or me, or any one else. And so she will die."

"No," said Julia, thoughtfully, "I know she is not like any of us. But I don't see why that should be any reason why she should die; perhaps it is a reason why she should live, and go on being good herself, and making other people good too. I'm sure we might every one of us have died, you and I, and Edith, and Dora Milford, and Minnie Carpenter too, and we should not, all of us together, have been half the loss that Alice Cornewall would be."

Marion looked up astonished at hearing her usually

apathetic sister express herself so warmly in Alice's praise, and said, "I did not think you cared so much about her."

"I don't know that I did care so much for her," Julia replied, "but I saw how good she was, and how useful she made herself. She did so many things for Mrs. Clifton, and was always trying to do something or other to please us girls. None of the others are at all like her. You are quite right there, Marion."

"Like her! no indeed, they are not," said Marion. "I tell you what, Julia," she added, "I think if it would make me like her, I would gladly change places with her now, and be ill, and die. I'm sure there's nothing in the world worth living for, except to be good. That was what Alice lived for. I know it was. And she tried to make others live for it too. She tried to make me. And she did make me. I was beginning to wish to be good, and to try to be good. But if Alice dies, I know I can't go on without her."

And Marion's tears flowed afresh, whilst Julia stood beside her not knowing what to say, or how to comfort her. At length she managed, quite unintentionally, to say the very thing which, of all others, was best calculated to draw off Marion's thoughts from her own grief, and lead her to think of others.

"Minnie Carpenter will feel it dreadfully," she said.

And at the sound of Minnie's name, Marion started up.

"Yes, poor little Minnie," she said; "she was very weak last night, Dawson told me. I wonder how she is to-day."



"Worse, I think," Julia replied, "at least I heard Miss Clifton say, 'the doctor is very uneasy about her too,' and of course she meant that he was uneasy about Minnie as well as Alice."

"But she has quite got over the fever," said Marion, "and surely that is the worst part."

"I don't know," said Julia, "I can fancy that Minnie could not stand any great illness. She is so small and pale, and looks so delicate, even when she is well. And Dawson says she is so weak and thin now, she can carry her about just like a baby."

"And her papa and mamma both died of consumption—perhaps she is going into one too," said Marion. "O Julia, what a dreadful business this has been!"

"And all Edith's fault!" said Julia.

"I was thinking that," replied Marion, "but I did not like to say so. It seems unkind, and I dare say she is miserable enough about it. I wonder what Mrs. Clifton has said to her, or whether she has said anything—perhaps she does not know. You know, Julia, we never should have known anything about it, if Dora Milford had not written you that letter, telling you about the scarlet fever's having been at Mrs. Graham's, and that Edith had slept in the very room where the lady died of it. I don't think it was quite kind of Dora to write that letter. But it was only what one might have expected from her. She hates Edith."

"Yes," said Julia, "and very natural too, when Edith

did nothing but vex and mortify her ; I'm sure she never lost an opportunity of triumphing over her."

"Alice would not have hated her in Dora's place," remarked Marion, quietly.

And then there was a long silence. Marion sat thoughtfully by the side of the bed, and Julia went on packing the travelling bag by herself.

At length Marion broke the silence by saying abruptly, —beginning with her favourite expression when excited about anything,—

"I tell you what, Julia—we are going home to-day, and of course they will all be talking about this scarlet fever. But I don't think we ought to say anything about Dora's letter to you, throwing all the blame on Edith. It must be bad enough for Edith to think that she is probably the cause of all this trouble and sorrow, and it would only make her still more miserable to know that every one else knew it too. No one at home is at all likely to know it unless we repeat it. And if I were you, I would destroy Dora's letter, and say nothing about it. It can't do any good to talk of it."

But Julia was not quite of this way of thinking. She had never liked Edith since the first day they met, when she had written to tell her friends that she was a proud, disagreeable-looking girl, and she did not see any reason why her feelings were to be treated with so much consideration. Besides, Julia rather fancied the idea of having something to tell, some secret to communicate, which would help to make her for the moment a person of some importance. So

that she did not feel at all disposed to fall in with Marion's wishes, and destroy Dora Milford's letter, and she was just going to decline doing anything of the kind, when her sister added, persuasively,—

"I'm sure it is what Alice would wish. I know she could not bear that any one should think or say that Edith was the cause of her illness. And she is so very ill; surely you would not like to do anything to grieve her."

Julia could not resist this last appeal.

"No," she said, "I certainly should not like to vex Alice. So there's the letter, and you may do what you like with it."

And, acting upon this permission, Marion took the letter from her sister's hand, and tore it into pieces.

"There," she said, "if the story gets about that Edith has been the cause of Alice's illness, it will not be through any fault of ours."

"It will get about," said Julia; "everything comes to be known and talked about somehow, and I am sure I shan't envy Edith's feelings if poor Alice dies, and she is looked upon as the cause of her death."

"It would be dreadful," Marion replied, "and yet, in such a grief as that, I should not think she would care much what people said or thought, her own feelings would be the worst of all. How miserable she must be!"

"Miserable indeed!" said Julia. "I am quite glad we may not see her before we go. I should not know what in the world to say to her. Dawson says she is quite well now, able to sit up in her room."

"Yes," said Marion, "the doctor did not even go in to see her to-day. He was in a hurry, and then he was so anxious about Alice, and Minnie—poor Minnie, I should think a great deal more of her if it were not that the thought of Alice seems to drive everything else out of my mind."

"You are so fond of Alice," Julia replied, "and I don't think you ever cared much for Minnie. I can't say I ever did either. She was always such a melancholy little thing, there was no getting anything out of her. Gay people don't care about grave ones."

"But Alice cares about Minnie," said Marion, "and Alice is gay, much gayer than you are, Julia, or than any of us. She is the merriest person in the house."

"Yes," said Julia, "I know she is, and she is great friends with Minnie. But then Alice isn't like anybody else. She seems to get on with the grave people and with the merry people, and is always friends with everybody. I never could make Alice out."

Marion was thoughtful for a minute or two, and then she said,—

"I think I can. I'm not like her. I'm afraid I never shall be. But I think I can understand what it is makes her so different from all of us. It's because she's so good—so religious, I mean. Did you listen to Mr. Morton's sermon last Sunday when he talked about good people following in the Saviour's steps, and growing to be more and more like him? I don't know whether it was because I was

thinking so much about Alice before we went into church, but she was in my mind all the time he was preaching, especially when he said that about weeping with those that weep, and rejoicing with those that rejoice. That's just like Alice."

But here the girls were interrupted in their long and most unusually interesting conversation, by a low knock at the door, which was followed by Miss Jane Clifton's quietly entering the room.

"Not ready yet," she said, pointing to the open bags and boxes. "It is nearly four o'clock, the cab will be here directly, and my sister wishes you to have some dinner before you go. She is very sorry she cannot wish you good-bye herself, but she could not come to you from Minnie's room for fear of infection, besides she could not leave her now."

"Minnie!" exclaimed Marion, "I thought she was with Alice. Is Minnie worse?"

"She is as ill as she can be," said Miss Clifton. "I fear there is not much hope now, but I have not seen her since this morning. My sister sent for me just now, and came to the door to give me a message for you, but I did not go in. I could hear the poor child's breathing, and I did not need to ask how she was. She cannot last long."

Marion's tears were falling fast by this time, and Julia looked graver and more unhappy than one might have supposed Julia could look.

"I hope some one will write to us," she said, "and tell us how they are to-morrow."

"I will write myself," replied Miss Clifton, "and you will, I know, remember my sister's message which I have not yet given you. I was to tell you how sorry she was not to see you, and to ask you from her to carry the remembrance of this solemn time with you to your happy home, and to ask yourselves how it would be with you, if you, instead of little Minnie, were now lying on your death-bed."

"Then she is dying," said Julia. "Oh, what will Edith say?"

"Edith!" said Miss Clifton, in a tone of surprise, "why should you think of her? I don't think she cared so very much for Minnie. It was Alice who seemed so fond of her."

Marion gave Julia a look of warning, as though she would beg her not to betray Edith's secret further.

Whatever Mrs. Clifton might know concerning the matter, it was evident that Miss Clifton had not been made acquainted with it.

The clock struck four, and Miss Clifton hurried the girls in finishing their packing, and having helped them to lock and direct their trunks, took them with her to the dining-room, and tried to make them eat something, but neither of them cared to do so, and every moment was occupied in asking fresh questions about Alice and Minnie, although Miss Clifton was not able to answer them, and could only assure

them, over and over again, that she had already told them all that she knew herself.

The cab drove to the door, and Miss Clifton accompanied the girls to the station. Everything seemed to them like a confused dream.

A week ago, they had been pursuing the quiet course of their unvaried life, learning their daily lessons, taking their accustomed walks, associating with their usual companions, and never dreaming of any change before the half-year should have worn itself away. And now in one short week how all was changed,—school broken up,—themselves on their way home,—Alice very, very ill,—and Minnie dying!

That was the strangest thought of all. It seemed impossible to Marion to realize it. That one of their own little party, so lately sitting amongst them in her accustomed place, should now be lying on a death-bed, going altogether out of this world into the strange unknown life beyond. It was a thought which she could scarcely bear to dwell on. And yet it occupied all her mind.

When Miss Clifton placed the tickets in her hand, she received them mechanically. When she gave her several careful directions concerning the journey, Marion did not hear a word that was said to her, and when the loud sound of the ringing of the bell startled her back into something like consciousness, and almost without knowing how she got there, she found herself in one of the carriages with her sister by her side,—the only words that escaped her lips were, "Minnie dying!"

## CHAPTER XVII.

Have we seen and heard  
The rejoicing bird  
As it 'scaped its weary prison,  
And taking its course  
To the day-light's source,  
On an eager wing arisen ?

\* \* \* \* \*  
Then why weep for thee,  
That thou now art free  
From the many chains that bound thee,  
And hast soared on high,  
Through an open sky,  
With the light of Heaven around thee ?

ANON.

Yes, Minnie was dying !

The doctor had talked of hope. But even while he was saying the words, Mrs. Clifton felt in her own mind that there was none. He had spoken of the possibility of her recovery, if she were even now to rally. But Mrs. Clifton knew, that having sunk so low, Minnie's was not a constitution to rally.

Weak and sickly as she had been all her life, there had been no strength wherewith to meet such a shock as this had been. From the first day when the fever left her, and she lay, still and white, upon her bed, without sufficient strength to raise her thin little hand to her head, or to speak above



the faintest whisper, Mrs. Clifton had felt that Minnie would never rally,—that the weary little frame would never again be restored to life and strength until it should arise from the sleep, into which it was now sinking, to meet its Saviour and Redeemer,—that the feeble voice would never again swell into sounds of hope, and joy, and strength, until it should be joined to the heavenly choir, who sing songs of praise above in honour of the Lamb.

And Mrs. Clifton had not been mistaken. For days Minnie lay there, seeming to get neither better nor worse. Her face was so white, it scarcely seemed as if it could grow whiter. Her frame was so thin and worn, it did not seem as though it could ever become more wasted than it was now.

But on the morning of the day on which the Carters left school, there had been a change. Mrs. Clifton had noticed it the instant that she had partially drawn back the closed curtain, and allowed the light to fall upon the face which she had watched so anxiously and lovingly. It was not more white perhaps than usual, but there was a look upon it which had not been there yesterday, and Mrs. Clifton had seen it too often not to know that it was the look of Death. The large eyes were raised to hers with an expression which, once seen, can never again be mistaken, and the little hand, which Mrs. Clifton took in hers as she sat down by the bed-side, felt as Mrs. Clifton knew well it would feel, when she raised it from the coverlid on which it lay, and pressed it gently but fondly in her own.

She gave one earnest loving look to Minnie, and then,

still holding the little hand in hers, she knelt in prayer beside the bed.

When she arose, Minnie's large eyes were fixed on her, and she said quietly, "You were praying for me, I know,—what were you praying?"

"That God would be with you through—"

Mrs. Clifton hesitated an instant, and Minnie said firmly, although faintly, "through the valley of the shadow of death."

"Yes," said Mrs. Clifton, "does it seem dark to you, my child?"

"No," she answered, "I knew I was in it. I felt it all night, and once I thought I should have passed through it before this, I felt so very, very weak. But now I am stronger; I think I shall live perhaps all day. I wish so much I could see Alice, just to say good bye,—is it quite impossible?"

And Minnie gave such a longing, pleading look, that it grieved Mrs. Clifton to the heart to be obliged to answer, "Quite impossible, I am afraid, my darling; you could not be moved from here, and, even if you could, Alice is too ill now to see you. She is not quiet and still as you are. She is in a high fever. She would not know you if you were to go to her."

"Will she die too?" Minnie asked.

"We cannot tell," Mrs. Clifton answered. "God only knows, and with Him we must leave it."

"Oh, I hope she will not die!" Minnie said with in-

creased strength of voice. "I have prayed that she might not die; if it is God's will, I hope she will get well."

"And you, dear Minnie," Mrs. Clifton asked, "have you prayed too that you might not die, that, if it is God's will, you too may recover?"

"No," said Minnie, "I never pray that, I could not pray it, for I do not wish it."

Minnie stopped speaking, and though Mrs. Clifton longed to draw her on to say something more, she scarcely liked to urge her, Minnie was such a strange child, so still and reserved, it was difficult to know how to talk to her.

And yet Mrs. Clifton felt so anxious about her, and longed so intensely to know what were her thoughts and feelings in this solemn moment, that she could not bear to remain silent, and after a few moments of prayerful silence, she said very earnestly,—

"You do not wish to live, Minnie dear, then you have hope in dying; will you tell me what your hope is?"

Minnie turned her dim eyes full upon Mrs. Clifton's face, her white lips parted into a smile, a bright, happy, thankful smile, such as Mrs. Clifton had never before seen upon that melancholy little face, and in a calm, firm voice, she said,—

"Jesus is my hope, that blessed Jesus that Alice first taught me to love."

And then she added, "Dear Alice, how much I have longed to see her, and thank her again; I have often thanked her before, but I should so like to see her now when I am feeling so much all I owe her."

"I will tell her what you say," said Mrs. Clifton, "it will make her very happy, in the midst of her sorrow. And oh, Minnie, my darling child, you do not know how happy your words have made me."

"Have they?" said Minnie, "I thought they would, and I wanted to tell you before, only that I was afraid to. I don't mean exactly that I was afraid, but you know I can't talk. I'm not like Alice. I can't say what I'm thinking or feeling, at least I could not before, but to-day I feel as if I could. If I had more strength, I should like to say many things, and I feel that I could say them now. I want to thank you, very, very much, dear Mrs. Clifton, for all your kindness, and I want to tell you, too, how sorry I have been for all the trouble I have given you. I have been very wicked, I know, but you will forgive me!"

Mrs. Clifton kissed her tenderly, and assured her that she had nothing to forgive, and that Minnie had never given her any trouble or sorrow, except the pain of seeing how sad she always was without being able to make her happier.

"Yes," said Minnie, "it was just that that was so wrong of me. I did not see it then, but I see it now. It was a great sorrow, but I ought to have been comforted, and it was very selfish and very wicked in me not to be, but to be always thinking about my own sorrow, and not caring for anybody or anything. I know I have been very ungrateful to you, dear Mrs. Clifton, and I am very sorry for it. If it had not been for Alice, I might never have seen how wrong I was. I'm sure you did all you could for me, and I can't

think how I could have turned away from all you said so long. I don't know what first made me turn to Alice, unless it was her being in such deep mourning."

"And her sweet face and voice," said Mrs. Clifton. "There are very few like Alice; I am not surprised that you were attracted to her at once."

"Are you not?" said Minnie. "I'm so glad you understand it."

It was a relief to Minnie's mind, for she had feared lest Mrs. Clifton should not be able to comprehend the peculiar attraction which had drawn her so strangely towards Alice, at the time that she was turning a deaf ear to all other comforters and advisers.

"Alice has been a great blessing to me, Minnie, as well as to you," Mrs. Clifton remarked.

Minnie looked surprised.

"I mean," Mrs. Clifton added, "in leading you, and others too, to think of things which I could not persuade you to think of. The example of a young person walking in the fear of God, and living in the light of His countenance, has far more weight with her companions than all the advice given to them by their elders and instructors can ever have. Alice does not suspect of how much use she has been to me since I have had her with me. Her light has shone forth clearly amongst you all, and you and others have been led through God's mercy to see and admire it, and to strive and follow in the way it led."

"Yes," said Minnie; "Marion loves Alice, and listens to

her. Tell her from me to love her more, and listen to her more, and then, like me, she will get better and happier. But perhaps Alice will not live, perhaps she will not be there for them to listen to. Oh, I hope she will not die."

"Not for her own sake," said Mrs. Clifton.

"No," said Minnie, "oh no, for she would be happy with Jesus. Nor for my sake, for I should have her in heaven. All I love best would be there then. But for the sake of so many,—her poor papa, who is so far away, and who has had so much sorrow,—and for you, Mrs. Clifton, and all of them, they all love her so much, and she is so useful and does them good. It would be very kind of God to spare her life."

"And if it is His will, we will ask Him to spare it," said Mrs. Clifton, "but you are weary with talking. Lie quiet now, and I will read to you, and then we will pray for you, and for Alice, and for others who need our prayers."

And Mrs. Clifton arranged Minnie's pillows, and made her lie quiet while she read to her the eleventh chapter of St. John—the very chapter which had so riveted Alice's attention on the first night of her coming to school.

It had had no power then to comfort Minnie's wounded heart, and Alice had observed with sorrow the untouched manner in which she had listened to the story of the Saviour's sympathy with the sorrowing sisters.

But now, as Mrs. Clifton read that same chapter in a soft, earnest voice, every word of it seemed to go home to Minnie's heart. Several times her eyes filled with tears, and when the words were read, "he whom thou lovest is sick,"

her thin hands were feebly clasped together in prayer for her who was, like Lazarus of old, one of the Saviour's loved ones, and who, like him, now lay sick unto death.

Mrs. Clifton's voice faltered as she came to the words, "Lord, if he sleep he shall do well," for they reminded her of the doctor's last words as he stood with anxious face that morning by Alice's bed, and watched her restless tossings, and listened to her incoherent wanderings,—“if we could only get her to sleep.”

The Saviour's visible presence was not in that sick chamber, but His power dwelt among men still; and, comforted by the thought of what Jesus once had done, and what Jesus yet could do, Mrs. Clifton felt that she could trust her best-loved child into the Saviour's keeping, with a mind entirely resigned to His.

If there was to be no sleep for Alice such as they earnestly longed to obtain for her, there was in store for her that better and yet more peaceful sleep which only the Great Physician Himself can give, and which He gives alone to His “beloved,”—and when she should awake from this sleep, she would indeed “do well,” for it would be in the presence of Him with whose likeness, on awaking, her heart would be abundantly satisfied.

Minnie did not speak when Mrs. Clifton finished reading the chapter, but her tearful eyes and clasped hands showed how deep an interest she had taken in it.

And then Mrs. Clifton knelt to repeat some of those holy prayers which have sounded in the ears of so many of God's

departing servants, and helped to support and strengthen them in their journey through the dark valley.

Two were repeated, and then Minnie said,—

“The one Mr. Morton read yesterday—the last one he read.”

And Mrs. Clifton repeated the prayer for a sick person, for whom there is but small hope of recovery.

When the words were read, “we know, O Lord, that there is no word impossible with Thee, and that if Thou wilt, Thou canst even yet raise her up, and grant her a longer continuance amongst us,” Minnie’s eyes were raised to heaven, and the word “Alice” escaped her lips.

And when Mrs. Clifton rose from her knees, and again seated herself by the bed-side with the little hand in hers, Minnie smiled again that peculiar, beaming smile which no one ever saw upon her face before, and said,—

“It is a beautiful prayer. It suits us both. A happy life for her, and a peaceful, happy death for me. That is what I pray God to send. For life will be a great blessing to her, and oh, dear Mrs. Clifton, will not death be a great gain to me?”

Minnie lay all that day, as calm and peaceful as though no great change were awaiting her when the day should close, although the doctor, when he came again, had said that it was very improbable that she would live through the night. He had not said the words in Minnie’s hearing, but she had remarked him when he whispered them in low tones to Mrs. Clifton as he left the room, and she had begged af-



terwards to be told exactly what he had said, and when the words were repeated to her, had smiled again with that peculiar smile.

Towards evening her mind wandered a little, a very little, and even then it could scarcely be called wandering. There was no excitement, no incoherent expression. It seemed more as if she had fallen asleep, and were talking in her sleep, only that her large eyes were open.

"So long as I have been without them," she murmured, "so very, very long, my own papa, and my own mamma, my very own. They say I am only twelve years old, and I know I am little even for that age, and ignorant too, and young in most things. But not in grief; I am not young in grief, I am very, very old in it, I think, for I have mourned so long for those who were my very own, and it has been such a weary time, such a weary, weary time. But it will soon be over now, and then I shall be happy. Oh so happy, and so thankful!"

She paused in her wandering, and Mrs. Clifton, who sat ever by her side holding her tiny hand, ventured to say,—

"And you will be with Jesus too. That will be happiest of all."

Minnie heard and understood.

"Yes," she said, "I shall think so then. I want to think so now. I am always longing to feel it. But they were my all upon earth. And now that they are in heaven, perhaps I think too much of them, and the joy it will be to see them there. But I do long to feel more joy at the thought of

seeing Jesus. And when once I am in heaven, I know I *shall* feel it. It will not be hard then. For I shall know that it was He who brought me there, and papa and mamma too. If it were not for Jesus we should none of us be there."

She was silent again for some little time, and breathed so low and faintly that, more than once, Mrs. Clifton laid her finger on the feeble pulse to assure herself that it had not altogether ceased.

The evening closed in. It grew so dark that Mrs. Clifton could no longer discern the face of the child beside her, and she was thinking whether it would be possible for her to leave the bed-side for one instant to draw back the window curtain, when Minnie spoke again, but this time in so faint a voice that Mrs. Clifton leant over the bed to hear her words.

"Whom have I in heaven but Thee? David said so. When I am in heaven I shall say so too. O Jesus, I do love Thee, take me to heaven that I may love Thee better."

And when Mrs. Clifton again laid her finger upon the little pulse it had ceased to beat!

There had been a deep wound in Minnie's heart, but it was healed now. Many tears had fallen from her eyes, but they were all dried now. In the place where she was gone to dwell, the sound of parting is never heard, and weeping and sorrow are unknown. Her spirit had not elasticity enough to rally from the heavy shock which had come upon

it in early years. On earth it never would have recovered, for Minnie's was one of those natures—happily for this world of sorrows there are not many such—which seem beyond the power of “the great healer, time.”

Years of separation from her parents would but have made the wound deeper and deeper. She might have grown more resigned, she had already become so, and doubtless each day and year passed in the Saviour's school would have taught her yet more and more of the great lesson of submission.

But happy, buoyant, light-hearted! no one who had looked once upon Minnie's solemn, thoughtful little face,—no one who had heard once the low, grave tones of her melancholy voice, would ever have dreamt of seeing her this. Had Minnie lived, the shadow of her early sorrow would have rested darkly upon her all the days of her life. How then could Mrs. Clifton, as she drew back the curtain, and allowed the light of the setting sun to fall in a rich happy glow upon the little face, lying there so still, with a bright smile upon its death look, such as it had never worn in life, how could she do otherwise than kneel down in very thankfulness to Him who had taken pity upon this wounded lamb, and, in His great compassion, carried the orphan home.

Mrs. Clifton rang the bell, and, softly as she did so, the sound startled her strangely after those long hours of still watching.

“All is peace here,” she said calmly, as Miss Clifton

came quietly into the room. "I will go to Alice now, and send Dawson here,—do you know how she is?"

"Yes," said Miss Clifton, "she is asleep."

"Then Minnie's prayer is heard, and she will live," said Mrs. Clifton; "thank God for this too."

## CHAPTER XVIII.

"Saviour! loose the burning chain  
From the fever'd heart and brain;  
Give, oh give the young soul back  
Into its own cloudless track.

Hear and aid!

Thou that said'st, 'Awake, arise,'  
E'en when death had quench'd the eyes,  
In this hour of grief's deep sighing,  
When o'erwearied hope is dying,

Hear and aid!"

MRS. HEMANS.

It was indeed a deep sleep in which Alice lay so still and motionless, that several times Dawson, as she watched beside her, rose nervously to lean over the bed-side and listen to her breathing, with a sort of dread lest it should not be possible that such intense stillness could be produced by sleep alone.

For days there had been no rest, only incessant wandering and tossing, and the quiet now seemed all the more strange from the contrast. Dawson had known much anxiety in her life, but never before had she felt anything like the suspense she endured, now that Alice had lain for days between life and death, and the doctor held out no hope, unless they could succeed in getting her to sleep.

Edith and Alice had sickened on the same day, but Edith's worst symptoms had yielded at once to the remedies prescribed, and she was already on the road to recovery, when Alice's illness assumed a very serious character, and in a few days she was pronounced in imminent danger.

Constituted with a feverish tendency, she had from infancy been subject to sudden and sharp attacks, and her parents had often been told that if she were to be seized with any dangerous fever, her chance of recovery would, humanly speaking, be slight. So that from the day when the delirium began to run high, Dawson had but little hope that she would live through it. She implored to be allowed to watch herself, and Mrs. Clifton, feeling that this was a natural wish, and knowing too that, so long as Alice remained in a state of such entire unconsciousness, she could be of far more use to Minnie than to her, resigned the chief part of the nursing of Alice to Dawson, and devoted herself principally to little Minnie.

For several days there had been no cessation of delirium in Alice, and often it had required all the strength of mind which Dawson possessed to enable her to retain her self-possession, as she watched beside the bed, on which Alice tossed to and fro, calling for those who could not answer to her call,—the tender father absent in a foreign country, and the beloved mother who was gone to that far land from which no traveller can return.

She had occasionally called for Edith too, and the

thought of her seemed always to agitate and trouble her. Sometimes she would stretch out her arms, and implore,—

“Edith, her own sister, her only sister, not to turn away from her, but to come and kiss her, and stay with her, as she used to do,”—and then, with a movement of repulsion, she would forbid her to come near her, declaring that “she had made her unhappy, and that she would not see her, for she knew she had no love left for her.”

And sometimes she had spoken of Minnie, but never in the same wild way. Hushing her voice to a whisper, she would say, “Poor little Minnie. I must not speak loud to Minnie. She cannot bear loud speaking. Her head always aches so much, and she has such sorrow in her heart.”

And then she would address her little friend as though she were present, in touching words of sympathy and soothing, until Dawson, as she listened to them, could not refrain from tears.

Whenever her mind was at all composed, the idea of Minnie's presence occupied it, and she would talk to her in low, loving tones.

But all through the previous night there had not been a moment even of this comparative consciousness,—for such it might be called.

For hours her cries had rung through the silent house, making themselves heard even in its most distant corners and chasing every thought of hope from the hearts of the many anxious watchers without, while Dawson, as she gazed upon her altered form, could scarcely realize that it was in-

deed her "own dear child." That voice, strained to its highest pitch in wild, agonizing cries, could it be the same which used to breathe such peaceful, melodious sounds?—that burning forehead, from which the purple veins seemed starting, was it the same which used to be so fair and mild, so undisturbed by care, and unruffled by frowns?—those parched and feverish lips, now tightly drawn together, were they the same which always parted in such rosy smiles of innocent mirth?—and those starting eyes, fixed in wild unconsciousness upon some imagined object, it seemed as though they could not be the same soft blue eyes which used to beam with such peculiar gladness.

Dawson thought of Alice as she but so lately had been. She looked upon her as she was now. And as she looked, the last ray of hope seemed to be shut out from her heart. But at that moment the words came into her mind, which have so often arrested the despairing thought,—“With God nothing is impossible.”

And then there arose before her mind a scene in the History of our blessed Lord and Saviour, of which she had often read, but which now came before her with as much vividness as though she had been present at it.

She fancied she could see the Saviour passing with looks of mercy, and thoughts of love, along His journey of compassion, but suddenly arrested by a father's agony, as he knelt at His feet, and besought Him greatly for the little daughter who lay at the point of death.

She thought she saw those who, even as the Saviour



went with the anxious father, met him with the tidings that there was no need to trouble the Master any further,—for that the child for whom he prayed was beyond all power to save.

And then she pictured to herself the scene that followed. The Saviour entering in majestic calmness upon the tumult of the afflicted household, and quieting the cries and lamentations of those who wept and wailed greatly with the words,—“Why make ye this ado and weep? the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth;”—and at the word of His power,—“Damsel, I say unto thee, arise,”—the maiden straightway arose.

From that sleep, which no earthly call had any power to break, the voice of Christ's Almighty power had called her to arise.

And was that power less great now? The same Jesus that was yesterday, is He not to-day, and shall He not be for ever?

One thing alone had He required of the father before He would lay his hands upon his child, that she might be healed and live, and that was faith.

One word alone had He addressed to him in his anxious sorrow, “Be not afraid, only believe.”

That same word now seemed addressed to her. She had been tempted to fear. But now she would pray that she might believe. And her faithful heart went up in a fervent, earnest prayer to Jesus, that if it were His holy will it might be well with the child,—and that the same great Saviour, who had power to awaken from sleep, when no other voice

could be of any avail, might now, should He see fit, still those piercing cries, and close those burning, aching eye-balls in that sleep which it seemed beyond the power of man to produce.

That prayer quickened into life new hope in Dawson's heart. She felt that there was a power which even now could save Alice's life, and avert a fresh sorrow from her already bereaved father, and, with a steady hand, she poured out the last draught which Alice was to take that night, and succeeded in getting her to drink it.

An hour after, Alice lay in a deep, still sleep, and Dawson watched beside her.

For hours she sat there alone. Miss Clifton had summoned her to Minnie's room, and Mrs. Clifton had returned with her to Alice's, and had then been persuaded to go and take some much-needed rest, while Alice still slept—so quietly, that Dawson trembled to think how little difference there seemed to be between her still repose, and that in which Minnie lay, never on earth to wake again, a few rooms further off.

Poor little Minnie! Dawson had loved her too, very much, and yet she could help to close her eyes, and lay her folded hands upon her breast, without one feeling of regret that those eyes would never again open upon this world, and that that breast would never more beat with life's pulsation.

Dawson knew more perhaps of Minnie than any one else did, and this was the reason perhaps why she, of all the house, was the one who sorrowed least for her death. For

often in the night, when Minnie had thought that she was quite unheard, Dawson had listened to her quiet weeping, and more than once had she heard from the child's lips such earnest prayers for patience and submission, as she had thought no child could pray.

Poor little Minnie, there was indeed no need to mourn for her, that the life, which had been so great a burden for her to bear, had been taken from her.

Who that saw a little bird, lying bruised and wounded beneath the tree from which its nest had fallen, would mourn if they should pass the same spot again, and see the same bird, that before only panted with a half-crushed life, now lying in peaceful stillness upon the soft green grass?

Long ago, Minnie's nest had fallen from the tree of all her earthly hopes and joys, and she, poor bird, had had no power to soar away, or to find a resting place in some other of this fair world's green spots; bruised and broken, she had lain long upon the ground, and however brightly earth's sunshine might have shone around her, it never would have had power to tempt her once more to take wing, and send forth a song of grateful joy,—the wing was broken, there was no power in the voice to sing.

Was it not an act of mercy then which carried Minnie away to the land where new songs are sung, by voices in which no note of sorrow can ever find a place, and where angels fly on unwearied wing around the great Redeemer's throne?

## CHAPTER XIX.

"The fever gone, with leaps of heart she sees her bending o'er her;  
Her face all pale from watchful love, the unwearied love she bore her."

Mrs. BROWNING.

THE first ray of morning light was piercing its quiet way through the closed shutter of Alice's room, when Dawson's watchful ear was arrested by a slight movement, and on looking up, she saw that Alice's eyes were open and turned towards her.

In another instant she was standing by the bed-side with the medicine in her hand which the doctor had desired should be given as soon as Alice awoke.

Alice drank it, and then, looking at Dawson with a dreamy, wondering look, she asked whether she "had been long asleep?"

"Yes," Dawson said, "a long time."

"And what went before?" said Alice. "It all seems so strange. I was ill, very ill, was I not? have I been long ill?"

"Yes," Dawson answered, "you have been very ill, my

darling, but you have had a long quiet sleep, and you will soon be well now."

"Only so weak," said Alice, softly, "I feel so very weak. I don't seem as though I knew anything. And yet I'm sure there is something I ought to know. I want to remember, and I can't. Tell me, Dawson."

"You are weak, Miss Alice, that is all," said Dawson, as she sat down by her bed-side, "by and by you will remember everything. The medicine will make you stronger, and then it will not be such trouble to think. Only now you must not trouble yourself about anything. You must just be quiet, and I will tell you what you wish to know. And soon you will have some breakfast, and that will do you good. You have had such a beautiful sleep, Miss Alice, thank God for it."

"Yes," said Alice, "thank God. I should have died, I think, Dawson, if I had not gone to sleep. I am sure I should, for I felt so dreadful. I can't remember everything, but I remember that. My head was burning so, and I saw such strange things,—oh, Dawson, you can't think what strange things I saw."

"Yes I can, Miss Alice," Dawson replied, "it was only the fever. But we must not talk about them—they are gone now."

"It seems such a long time ago since then," said Alice, "have I been so very long asleep?"

"Ever since this afternoon," replied Dawson, "and it is night now. Look, Miss Alice, the moon is shining through

the shutter. I will light the lamp. And then I must order something for you, and send word to Mrs. Clifton that you are awake. She was to be told directly."

And Dawson rose to ring the bell, and light the night-lamp, which was standing in a distant corner of the room.

"Sit down again, Dawson, please. I have so many things I want to ask you," said Alice, gently. "Oh, how I wish I did not feel so weak, or that I could remember. Tell me all about it, please. I can't rest until I know. It is so dreadful, this trying to think, and not being able."

"It will all come back, Miss Alice," said Dawson; "you have been very ill, and the doctor gave you something to quiet the fever and make you sleep. For a long time it had no effect, and then you fell into a deep sleep, and now that you are only just awake, you feel so confused, you can't collect your thoughts. You must be patient, my darling."

"Yes," said Alice, "patient. That is what I want. I am always so impatient."

"And it would hurt you to talk," said Dawson, "that is why I want you to be quiet now, and by and by you shall talk as much as you like. There is some one at the door now. I must send for what I want, and then I will come and sit by you."

"But have you been here ever since I went to sleep?" asked Alice, when Dawson, having given her messages to the maid who answered the bell, resumed her place by the bed-side,—“and were you taking care of me all the time

before? How tired you must be! Do go to bed now, and let Martha come. Have they all gone to bed?"

"All but Martha," said Dawson, "she is sitting up with me in case you should want anything."

"And Mrs. Clifton?" asked Alice.

"She is gone to bed now," said Dawson, "she will come to you soon, and then I shall have some rest. You need not think about me, Miss Alice. You know I can sit up more than most people. I have had practice enough in that way in my life."

"But you look tired," said Alice, anxiously, "you are quite pale. I can see you are, now that the room is light. Oh how much trouble I have given! I won't talk, at least not much, only just tell me how long I have been ill, and what made me first ill."

"You have been ill more than a week, and it was the scarlet fever first," Dawson replied.

But no sooner had she uttered the words than she would gladly have withdrawn them. For the mention of the scarlet fever seemed suddenly to recall Alice's recollections of the past, and she exclaimed with some excitement in her voice,—

"Oh yes, I know, how could I forget? We were all ill,—Edith too, and Minnie, dear little Minnie. Oh Dawson, I hope they have not been very ill,—are they quite well now?"

And seeing that Dawson hesitated, she asked again, in a hurried, excited way, "Are they both well now?"

For a moment Dawson's heart sank within her, as she noticed the quick flush that was mounting into Alice's cheek and brow, and remembered the doctor's words of warning to keep her perfectly free from all excitement.

She scarcely knew whether it was right or wrong. She had no time to think. Alice's bright eyes were fixed on her, in eager expectation for her answer, and all she could summon courage to say was, "They are both well, my darling."

"Thank God," said Alice; "how good God is!"

And, to Dawson's thankful relief, she asked no further questions, but allowed her to arrange her pillows, and lay her quietly back on them, and listened to her injunctions that she should not say another word.

Nor did she until Mrs. Clifton came, and, leaning tenderly over her, kissed her with such a kiss of deep affection and fervent thankfulness, as Alice had never imagined other than a mother's lips could have given.

Alice had loved Mrs. Clifton truly and deeply before, but she never afterwards forgot that kiss, or the full tide of grateful loving feeling which gushed from her heart as she received it. She longed for strength to put her arms gratefully around Mrs. Clifton's neck, but all she could do was to hold out her little white hand and say,—

"I am quite well now, only weak, and I am glad I am going to stay with you."

Dawson had gone to see about some refreshment for



Alice, and Mrs. Clifton would not allow her to speak. Laying her finger on her lips, she said,—

“We must not talk now, Alice, no, not a word. You will take what Dawson brings, and then you shall lie quiet, and I hope go to sleep again, but anyhow there must not be a word spoken. By and by I hope we shall have a long talk.”

And Alice was so accustomed to do just what Mrs. Clifton told her that she asked no more questions, and only replied with a submissive smile.

She took the refreshment which Dawson brought, and then Mrs. Clifton made her lie down again on the pillow, and long before Dawson, who went to get some greatly-needed rest, had been able to forget her many hours of anxious suspense, or close the eyes which had been so long open in weary watchfulness,—Alice was again wrapped in a soft, sweet sleep.

When she next awoke, the noon-day sun was at its height, the green jalousie without had been closed to exclude the hot light, but the window was open to admit the fresh air, and through it came the song of the birds, sending forth such sweet notes of thankful praise that they seemed to Alice like a welcome back to earth.

“How sweetly the birds sing,” were her first words to Mrs. Clifton. “It seems as if they knew that I was better, and were glad of it. Their songs sound like a welcome.”

Mrs. Clifton smiled.

“The thought that fills our own mind colours everything

around. The birds would still be singing as gaily, Alice, if we were not near to hear them, or if our hearts were as full of sorrow as they are now of thankfulness, but their song would not sound the same to us, because we should listen to it with different hearts, and the gaiety to which their voices are attuned would jar with the mournfulness of our feelings, instead of harmonizing with their happiness, as it does now.

"You are very thankful to be better, dear Alice," she added, "yet I hope you were not afraid to die. You were very near death at one time, my child; you did not know that you were, for you were not conscious, but had you realized it, would you, do you think, have feared to die?"

"I don't know," Alice replied, "perhaps one can't tell unless one had actually felt that one was going to die, but I don't think I should have been *afraid*."

She laid an emphasis on the last word, and then added, after a few moments' silence,—

"Only because of Jesus. I think the thought of Jesus would have kept me from being afraid. You know mamma was not afraid to die. We were with her when she died,—Edith and I,—and she was so happy and peaceful. And when papa remarked to her how happy she seemed, I remember so well the words she said,—'Yes, quite, quite happy. Jesus has forgiven all my sins, and I am going to Him.' And you know, dear Mrs. Clifton,"—and Alice's clear blue eyes were fixed on her friend's face with a bright look of happy assurance,—“you know Jesus is just as willing to forgive my sins as mamma's, and I hope He has forgiven

them, and that if I had died, I should have gone to Him too—don't you think so?"

"Yes, Alice," Mrs. Clifton replied, "I do think so. And but for this thought I should indeed have been miserable during all the days I was so anxious about you. I don't know how I could have borne such suspense as that would have been."

Mrs. Clifton spoke very feelingly, for the thought had often been in her mind, of the agony she would have suffered if it had been Edith, or Dora, or any other worldly or careless one, by whose dying-bed she had been called upon to watch.

Alice was the first to resume the conversation. "I don't think I should have been afraid," she said, thoughtfully, "but I did not wish to die. I wished to live. I hope it was not wrong, but I would rather tell you, that you may know what I really did feel. When first I was taken ill,—before that dreadful time, you know,—when my head was all in a whirl, and I felt so strange,—I can't remember it well now, and Dawson told me not to think about it."

"Dawson was right," said Mrs. Clifton, "it would only trouble you. And I scarcely know whether you ought to talk about anything. Your head must be weak, and so is your voice."

"Oh no," said Alice, "my head feels quite well, and you know I have not spoken at all for so many, many hours, and when the doctor came, he said I could not be better, and

that medicine has made me so much stronger even since then. I like so much to talk to you. It does me good."

"Well then," said Mrs. Clifton, "we will talk a little, and then you shall rest, and this evening we will talk again, and to-morrow I hope you will be very much better."

"And able to see the others," said Alice. "I want so much to see Edith and Minnie."

Mrs. Clifton did not answer, and Alice did not repeat the question. She lay quiet all day, gaining strength with every hour, and when in the evening the doctor came again, it was to pronounce the joyful news that all danger was now past.

## CHAPTER XX.

"If God so pardoneth crime, how should these petty sins affect Him?  
So he transgresseth yet again, and falleth by little and little,  
Till the ground crumble beneath him, and he sinketh in the gulf despairing;  
For there is nothing in the earth so small that it may not produce great things,  
And no swerving from a right line, that it may not lead eternally astray."

PROVERBIAL PHILOSOPHY.

ANXIOUS as had been Dawson's watching during those two days and nights of suspense, intense as had been Mrs. Clifton's anxiety, as she went from one sick room to another, not knowing how soon either of them might become the abode of death, the suspense which they had gone through was nothing to that which Edith endured, as hour after hour she sat in her own room, knowing that Alice lay dangerously ill, and that if she died, she must look upon herself as the cause of her death.

No one knew her secret, or she imagined that no one did so, but at this moment the fact of her guilt being known only to herself, in no way lessened the acuteness of her misery.

If Alice died, she might never be upbraided by the world as the cause of her death, but in her own heart she would feel that she was so, and the remorse she should suffer

within, would need no reproaches from without to add to its poignancy.

Perhaps if Miss Clifton, or the servants, or the doctor had had any idea that Edith had been in any way instrumental in bringing this dreadful illness into the house, they might have had compassion on her misery, and been more guarded in speaking before her of the fatal consequences which were likely to arise from it. But they did not know, and whenever Miss Clifton came to see her, or any of the servants brought her anything, they were sure to speak about this dreadful fever, wondering how it came into the house, and saying how little hope there now was of its disappearing without carrying off one victim, if not two.

Alice was the favourite of all the servants, especially of Martha, the young person whose special business it was to help Dawson, and wait upon the young ladies.

She had had the illness herself, and had therefore been allowed to assist in the nursing, and now that Mrs. Clifton and Dawson were both entirely occupied with Alice and Minnie, her chief business was to attend upon Edith, who was convalescent, but not yet allowed to leave her room.

It was from Martha that Edith obtained information of how the two patients were going on, and Martha was careful in reporting every unfavourable symptom, and every anxious word which she had heard, for she had fancied that of late her favourite Miss Alice had been slighted and neglected by her sister. She saw that Edith was miserable about her now. She thought that part of her misery might be occa-

sioned by the remembrance of her neglect of her. And, as she told her fellow-servant, she was "glad to see Miss Cornewall was finding out her sister's value at last."

"I'm afraid it's too late," she added; "I heard the doctor say to Mrs. Clifton last night, that he didn't think there was any hope, not unless they could get her to sleep. And there is no chance of that, I fancy, for when I carried up the vinegar to Mrs. Dawson last night, I could hear her screaming and raving before ever I came near the door. I'm forbidden to go near the room unless the bell rings. It has not rung yet, and so I'm afraid there isn't any change, and that she's been a raving on in that wild way all day."

"Poor young lady!" replied the other servant, "so good as she was too."

"Good!" exclaimed Martha, "she just was good. You don't know, Mary, how good she was, because you had not much to say to her."

"No," said Mary, "I'm not aware that I ever spoke twenty words to her, and yet, Martha, you wouldn't believe, perhaps, how fond I am of her, nor how sorry I shall be if I never see her sweet little face on earth again. It did me good just to see her. If I were going up-stairs, and I met her coming down, and stood aside to let her pass, she'd give me such a pleasant smile, or say a kind word or two, that after she'd gone, I'd remember it to myself, and it seemed to me as if I went about my work with a lighter heart for having seen and heard her."

"Yes," said Martha, "I always feel just the same."

"And then, you know, I always saw her twice a-day at prayers," said Mary, "and if I had never seen her anywhere else, I believe I should have got to love her only from that. Just to look at her face when she was reading her Bible, or listening when it was explained, or to hear her voice joining in the prayers, it was like a sermon to me. I have said so many times."

"So have I," said Martha; "I told Mrs. Dawson only the other day that it was just like having an angel in the house to have such a young lady as Miss Alice."

"And she thought so too, I'm sure," said Mary.

"Yes," said Martha, "she said it was, 'and,' says she, 'shall I tell you the reason why? It's just because Miss Alice has got the spirit of an angel in her, and that's the Spirit of the Master of Heaven Himself.' Those were Mrs. Dawson's words, I remember them well, and what's more, I believe they're true. But I must go and see after Miss Cornwall."

"Poor young lady," said Mary, "it's hard for her to know her sister so bad, and not be able to see her. Does she know how bad she is, Martha?"

"Yes," said Martha, "I told her myself. I don't think she knew all the truth before, for she started as if she had been shot, and turned as white as a sheet."

"You should not have told her," said Mary, "especially when she is only just out of the fever herself, and can't be strong. Mrs. Clifton would not be pleased."

"Perhaps not," said Martha, "and I wouldn't have



frightened her, only that I think she has treated Miss Alice very shabbily of late. She seemed to care nothing at all about her, so long as she could go away and amuse herself elsewhere. And I know Miss Alice has fretted about it ! ”

“ How can you know ? ” asked Mary.

“ Oh, very well,” said Martha, “ I’ve seen Miss Alice look sad more than once of late, and the other week, when I’d been helping Miss Cornewall to dress, and Miss Alice had been helping her too, and she went off without so much as thanking her, or saying good-bye, Miss Alice turned away from me, and began putting by the collars and things in the drawers, and I knew she was crying even before I saw the tears falling down in amongst the things. She has a tender heart, has Miss Alice, and Miss Cornewall has grieved it often. She is sorry for it now. And I’m very glad she should be.”

And with these words Martha went up-stairs. The door of Edith’s room was ajar. Martha knocked at it, but there has no answer.

“ Miss Cornewall,” she said, but no one replied.

Martha pushed open the door, and went in. To her surprise the room was empty. She laid the tray on the table, and was wondering what could have become of Edith, who, she knew, was not allowed to leave the room, when a faint cry fell upon her ear, followed instantly by what seemed to be a fall, and making her way hastily into the direction from whence the sounds had come, she ran out into the passage, and, close to Alice’s door, found Edith lying on the ground

in a deep swoon, and Dawson kneeling beside her, endeavouring to raise her.

"Lift her up, Martha," she said, "carry her back to her room. I cannot leave Miss Alice. She is asleep, and I must watch her. Call Mary to help you. She has only fainted."

And Mary having been called, she and Martha carried the fainting girl back to her own room, and laid her on the bed, while one of them went in search of Miss Clifton, and the other endeavoured to bring her back to consciousness.

"It is a deep swoon," said Miss Clifton, as Edith opened her eyes, to close them again immediately, and relapse into unconsciousness.

Martha was frightened. "Had we not better send for Mrs. Clifton, ma'am," she asked, "if Mrs. Dawson can't come?"

"Mrs. Clifton cannot leave Miss Carpenter," Miss Clifton answered, "but there is no need of alarm here. It is only a fainting fit. See, she is recovering now."

And Edith opened her eyes, and looked around her with returning consciousness.

"Where am I?" she asked.

But before her question could be answered, she caught hold of Miss Clifton's hand, and looked in her face with an expression of agony, while her sister's name escaped her lips.

"What of Alice?" asked Miss Clifton.

"She is dead," said Edith, "she is dead. I have killed her."

Miss Clifton could not understand. She thought that Edith had lost her senses, but she answered,—

“Alice dead! No, she is asleep. She is better. . She will soon be well. Edith, my dear child, what is the matter?”

For, on hearing her first words, Edith clasped her hands together, and the tears poured down her face.

“I thought she was dead,” she said; “I had listened so long, all the morning, and all day I had heard her screaming. And then the screams grew fainter. And then they ceased altogether. I thought she was dead, and I could not stop there any longer. I tried to get to her. And I got into the passage. I think I must have fainted then, for I can’t remember any more.”

“You should have rung your bell, and sent for me,” said Miss Clifton. “I thought Martha was with you, and I had had no rest last night, and had gone to lie down. Why did you not ring before?”

“I don’t know,” said Edith; “I never thought of ringing. I sat here hour after hour listening to Alice, and when it grew dark, I felt nearly mad, and I was sure she was dead, when I could not hear her any more.”

Miss Clifton made her take some refreshment, and then she smoothed her pillows, and persuaded her to try and sleep; and Edith, comforted with the assurance that Alice was better, and wearied with the hours of miserable suspense she had endured, was soon asleep.

Miss Clifton made a sign to Martha to speak to her, and when they had left the room, she said,—

"I must go now, Martha, for I am wanted. You must remain with Miss Cornewall until she wakes, and then send for me. I shall give orders that no one else comes into the room. She must be kept quiet, and if any one were to startle her with bad news, the consequences might be serious."

"But I thought, ma'am, you said Miss Alice was better."

"Yes, Martha, she is out of danger, I hope, but Miss Carpenter is dead."

"Dead," said Martha, "I did not think it would have been so soon."

"Nor did we," said Miss Clifton, "it was sudden at the last. Miss Cornewall must not be told of it yet. You should not have left her so long alone. I quite thought that you were attending upon her, or I should have come myself to inquire after her. When she wakes, you must send for me."

And Miss Clifton went to see if her sister were awake, and to see what she could do for her. She told her of Edith's fainting fit, and of the strange words which she had uttered on recovering from it, and something in Mrs. Clifton's manner made her think that they did not seem so strange to her.

"I will go to her myself when she awakes," she said, "but now I must go to Alice. She is awake and quite conscious."

"She does not know about Minnie, I conclude," said Miss Clifton.

"Not yet, but I hope to tell her to-morrow."

"It will be a great shock," said Miss Clifton, "could it not be concealed from her for a little longer?"

"I think not. She has already asked to see her, and by and by she will ask more questions, and we could not evade them truthfully. It will be a great grief to her. But I have no fears for Alice. She will not have now for the first time to learn submission to a Father's will. Alice has been long a learner in His school. I cannot stay longer away from her, for Dawson has gone to bed, and I have left Mary sitting there. I sent for you, and found that you were with Edith, but Mary did not tell me that she had been ill. She said that you were busy in Miss Cornewall's room, and begged to be allowed to sit with Alice, while I came here to dress. It was strange to see the delighted expression of her face when I gave her leave to remain in the room for half an hour. She seemed to think it quite an honour to have charge of Alice for that time."

"All the servants are so fond of her," said Miss Clifton.

"And with reason," replied Mrs. Clifton, "for she has a kind word and look for every one."

## CHAPTER XXI.

"Father and Lover of our souls!  
Though darkly round thine anger rolls,  
Thy sunshine smiles beneath the gloom,  
Thou seek'st to warn us, not confound,  
Thy showers would pierce the harden'd ground,  
And win it to give out its brightness and perfume."

CHRISTIAN YEAR.

THE next morning when Alice awoke, her first request to Mrs. Clifton was that she might be allowed to see Edith and Minnie.

"I feel so well and strong to-day," she said, "I was longing for you to come that I might ask you. You can't think how much better I feel."

And Mrs. Clifton was indeed surprised to see how much better she looked, and how great a change a second quiet night's rest had wrought.

Alice was calm and composed, and her countenance had so entirely regained its natural expression, that it was difficult to realize that only two days before the fever had been at its height, and all thought of hope had nearly died away.

It grieved Mrs. Clifton to the heart to be obliged to sadden the joy which Alice was feeling at being brought

back from the gates of death, to remain with those she loved so well on earth, but she felt that there was no help for it.

"You shall see Edith, my darling," she said, "she will come to you whenever you like. But dear little Minnie you cannot see now. Alice, my child, one day we shall go to her, but Minnie can never more come back to us."

Words such as these could have but one meaning, and yet Alice could not bring herself at once to understand them. She started and looked incredulous.

"What do you mean?" she said. "I thought Minnie was well. Dawson said so. Oh, Mrs. Clifton, is it not true?"

"She is well, my darling," replied Mrs. Clifton, "better far than she could be even if had pleased God that she should have been brought, as you have been, safely through this fever. Minnie is there, Alice, where no sickness ever comes, and where sorrow is unknown, safely gathered to rest in the Saviour's bosom. She was not happy on earth. She is perfectly happy now. Surely, Alice, you would not wish it otherwise."

"No," said Alice, "no, I would not."

But her voice was low and trembling. And as she said the words, she buried her face in the pillow, and burst into tears.

"I knew it would be a great grief to you, my love," said Mrs. Clifton. "It is so to me also, for I loved that dear child deeply, but it is a sorrow which is more full of

comfort than any I have ever known before. Little Minnie's was a blighted life. I don't think she would ever have been really happy in this world. Her great grief had left too deep a shadow over her. No time would ever have removed it. No future sunshine would have been bright enough to chase the gloom entirely away. She was a sensitive little plant, Alice, and she had been wounded at the very root. We might have nurtured her, watched over her, and cherished her with the fondest care, and we should have done so, for we loved her dearly, but I do not think we should ever have seen her bloom again. O Alice, was it not a kind hand that removed her from the soil where she was withering, and transplanted her to that heavenly garden, where she shall live with a new life, and bring forth fruit abundantly? When I think of her as she was with us, and then turn my thoughts to think of her as she is now, from my heart I can thank God who has taken her to Himself."

"Yes," said Alice, "I am sure you can. And I know I shall do so too, for she was never happy here, and she is quite happy now. But I should so like to have seen her again, just once, if it had only been to say good-bye."

"She sent you a message," said Mrs. Clifton. "She thought constantly of you, and longed earnestly to see you. But it was not possible. You were then in the height of the fever. She begged me to give you her fondest love, and to thank you for all your kindness to her, but especially for the one great kindness of all—for having led her to think of her Saviour, and turn to Him for comfort. She is tasting



now the full benefit of having come to Jesus. And you, Alice dear, it must be a happy thought to you that you were allowed to be helpful in leading her to Him."

"Did Minnie say that I was?" asked Alice. "She always thought I had done a great deal more for her than I really had. I never did anything but listen to her, and tell her some of the things mamma used to tell us."

"And she listened to you," said Mrs. Clifton, "and God blessed all you said to the instruction of her soul. You see, Alice, how even the youngest can be instruments of good in His hands."

"I should like to be one," said Alice; "I should like it more than anything in this world. Jesus has been so good to me. I long to do something for Jesus. I have often asked Him to let me do something for Him."

"And He has heard your prayer, as He always does the prayers of those who truly love Him. God can work with what instruments He chooses. And often He chooses those that seem small and weak, rather than those which, to the eyes of man, appear more suited. Minnie listened to you, Alice dear. Yet she would not listen to older and more experienced advisers."

"She was so shy," said Alice.

"Yes," replied Mrs. Clifton, "and so reserved when speaking to her elders. I never could get her to open her heart to me, much as I longed to do so. It was God, Alice, who gave the key of that little heart into your hands. You must be very grateful to Him. There is nothing to boast

of, for these things are all of God's ordering. And, as I said just now, it is often His way to choose the weakest instruments to work with; there is no cause for pride, only for thankful love."

"I feel that," said Alice. "I can't think how people can ever take credit to themselves for anything they may do right or useful, because we cannot do anything without God's making us do it."

"No," said Mrs. Clifton, "it is He that worketh in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure. He gives us right thoughts. They are the direct inspiration of His Holy Spirit. And He enables us by the help of the same Spirit to carry these thoughts into execution and perform right actions. All wish and all power to do right comes from Him, and it is those who feel most their own weakness, who become the strongest, because they go to Him continually for help."

"Yes," said Alice, "I know that is true, because I am so very weak myself; mamma used to say my only hope of success was in trusting myself entirely to Jesus. She was always telling Edith and me that we could do nothing by ourselves, and begging me to trust in Jesus, that I might not fall by my own weakness, and begging Edith to trust in Jesus, that she might not fall by depending on her own strength. May I see Edith, now?" she added; "does she know about Minnie?"

"Not yet," said Mrs. Clifton, "she was not well yesterday, or I should have told her; she had frightened herself

about you, and was ill in consequence, but to-day she is quite recovered. I must go to her now, and tell her, and then you shall see her. Dawson will sit with you while I am away."

When Mrs. Clifton entered Edith's room, she found her up and dressed, but looking very pale and miserable. She started when the door opened, and she remarked the grave expression of Mrs. Clifton's face, and her first inquiry was for Alice.

"Alice is better," said Mrs. Clifton.

Edith uttered an exclamation of thankfulness.

"You are thankful, Edith," said Mrs. Clifton, "you have reason to be."

Mrs. Clifton's tone was grave, almost severe, or Edith fancied that it was so. There was surely some pointed meaning in the emphasis which she laid upon the last words, "you have reason to be;" or was it only a guilty conscience that led Edith to suppose so.

She trembled all over, as she answered, "Yes, very thankful."

"And to whom, Edith?" said Mrs. Clifton gravely.

Edith hesitated in answering the question, and it was repeated.

"To whom are you thankful, Edith?"

The colour mounted into Edith's pale cheek, and her voice faltered,—*"thankful to God."*

But her eyes were averted from Mrs. Clifton's face, as she spoke the words.

"Then do you think that it has been in answer to *your* prayers that Alice has been brought back from the very gates of death? Tell me, Edith," and Mrs. Clifton sat down by her side, "have *you* deserved this mercy at God's hands?"

Did Mrs. Clifton know? or what made her speak so strangely, so unlike her usual calm, tender, sympathizing manner?

"Do you know?" Edith asked in an eager, agitated voice. "Oh, Mrs. Clifton, tell me, do you know?"

"Know what?" said Mrs. Clifton.

"All I have longed to tell you," replied Edith, bursting into a passionate fit of weeping, "all that has made me so miserable. Oh, Mrs. Clifton, do you know, that if Alice had died, I should have killed her. I wanted to tell you before. That day, that dreadful day, when I lay awake listening to Alice's screams, and felt that, before night came, I should be her murderer, I felt that I could not keep it from you any more, that I must tell you all. I meant to tell you as soon as you should come, but when you opened the door, I saw by your face that you knew. Oh, Mrs. Clifton, do you know?"

"I know that you have deceived me, Edith, and that the consequences of your deception have been very dreadful. But I do not know the particulars, and I do not wish to inquire into them now. My heart is very heavy. There is that in the house now which would prevent my entering into the sad story that has come to my ears. I must do so

later, painful as it will be. But this is not the time to exact a forced confession."

"But it shall not be a forced confession," exclaimed Edith, rising from her chair and falling on her knees before Mrs. Clifton, "I will tell you everything, all, from the very beginning. You were away, and we were asked to go to Mrs. Graham's farewell party. Alice did not wish to go, because she thought you would not like it, and that papa would not wish it. But I did, and when Miss Clifton made me write to ask you, I posted the letter late, on purpose that you might not get it. And then, just before the party, the very day, I received a note from Mrs. Graham saying that they had had the scarlet fever in the house, and asking whether we would be afraid to go. I did not think there was any danger, but I thought if Miss Clifton knew she would not let me go, and—and I destroyed the note. Oh, Mrs. Clifton, I have been miserable ever since. I know you will despise me, and everybody else will despise me too. Must they all know?"

The day before, Edith's agony concerning Alice had been so great that if the whole of her conduct had been at that moment disclosed, she would scarcely have felt the shame of the disclosure, so completely would all other feelings have been lost in the one great misery of having caused her sister's death.

But now that her fears for Alice were relieved, she thought of her position, and the idea of being obliged to

confess her deception before her companions, and of lowering herself in their eyes, was hateful to her.

"I do not mind your knowing," she said to Mrs. Clifton, "for you are kind and good, and I know you will forgive. But for the others to know, for the Carters to look down upon me, and for Dora Milford to triumph over me, oh, Mrs. Clifton, it would be dreadful!"

And again Edith asked anxiously, "if they must all know?"

Mrs. Clifton did not answer. For some minutes she did not speak, but she leant her forehead upon her hand, and seemed deep in thought. It was evident that Edith's sorrow, though sincere, was not a true repentance. Frightened at the result which had followed upon her deception, she bitterly regretted her past conduct, but she regretted it only because it had brought misery to herself and others.

"Edith," said Mrs. Clifton at length, "you are unhappy."

"Yes," said Edith, "wretched!"

"And you regret your conduct, the thought of it makes you miserable."

"Yes," said Edith, "miserable!"

And there was no mistaking the sincerity of her tone.

Edith was sorry. But it was not a sorrow that satisfied Mrs. Clifton. Again there was a silence of a few minutes, and then Mrs. Clifton said,—

"Edith, do you remember the account which is given us

in the Book of Samuel of David's sin, and of the repentance which followed it?"

Edith did not answer, and Mrs. Clifton continued,—  
"There was much in his sin which resembled yours. He coveted that which it was not lawful for him to possess, that which God, by the ordering of His providence, had not seen fit to place within his power. Not being able to obtain what he desired by lawful means, he was guilty of a great sin. You remember, Edith, that he caused the man who stood in his way to be put to death. This was his sin."

"Yes," said Edith.

"And then," said Mrs. Clifton, "we read of his repentance. God brought him to a sense of sin. He saw how vile his conduct had been, how heinous had been his departure from the right way, and what do we see is then the feeling of his heart? '*Against Thee* have I sinned, and done this evil in *Thy* sight.' He had offended against the laws of man. He had injured his fellow-creatures. He had lowered himself in the eyes of all. But we do not find that it was on account of this that he mourned so deeply. He had offended God. The evil was done against God. He had rendered himself hateful in God's sight. This was the cause of his grief. Edith, is it the cause of yours?"

Again Edith did not answer, and Mrs. Clifton said,—

"You were very wretched the night before last, because you thought that your conduct had caused Alice's death. You feel relieved now, because you know that she is safe. But her danger or her safety makes no real difference in

your own share in this unhappy business. If Alice had died, your sin would have been no greater than it is now. Her being alive does not make it any less."

"Oh yes, it does," exclaimed Edith, "if Alice had died, I should have been her murderer. I should never have forgiven myself."

"For the consequences of your sin," said Mrs. Clifton, "but not for the sin itself. In either case that remains the same. You do not see this, Edith."

"No," said Edith, "I do not."

"But it is the truth," said Mrs. Clifton. "You imagine that you are truly penitent. I cannot think that you are. You have been frightened at the probability of the dreadful consequences which were likely to result from your sin, and, in your anxiety, you bitterly repented of your conduct. But now you are anxious to forget it—anxious that I should forget it—that it should never reach your father's ears—that your companions should not know of it. Edith, if your repentance were real, these would not be the first feelings of your heart. Your first feeling would be that you had offended God, that He was angry with you, and that the light of His countenance could no longer shine upon you. Stay, Edith, I think I can make my meaning clear."

"Do you remember a few weeks ago, how unhappy little Lucy Maitland was because she had disobeyed Anna's orders, and left her sister's canary on the ground, and do you recollect how you all tried to comfort the child, and could not succeed in quieting her tears?"



"Yes," said Edith, "I remember."

But she saw no resemblance between little Lucy Maitland and herself, and felt almost disposed to be offended at Mrs. Clifton's talking to her in what seemed a childish tone.

"I speak to you of Lucy," said Mrs. Clifton, "because I was particularly struck at the time by the manner in which she expressed her grief. It was such an evident proof of the love she felt for her sister. She had been very fond of the bird herself, but she did not seem to think of this. All she cared for was having grieved Anna. If you remember, Edith, she said continually, 'Anna will be so sorry. I have made Anna unhappy, and she will think me so ungrateful, after all the care she takes of me, to have been so disobedient to her.' I was struck with the child's conduct. It seemed to me a perfect example of true, *loving* repentance—the repentance which we ourselves should exercise when, like that child, we have been disobedient and ungrateful to a kind and loving friend. Oh, Edith, if I could see something of this spirit in you, how much happier I should be. If I could only see you acknowledging the sinfulness of your conduct, and grieving over it, as committed against your best Friend,—one to whom you owed all the obedience of a loving, grateful child. Edith, God has been very good to you,—what has been the return which you have rendered to Him?"

Edith's heart was touched. She leant her head against Mrs. Clifton and sobbed aloud.

"I do not like to give you pain," said Mrs. Clifton,

gently, "but indeed, Edith, it would be no true kindness which would hide from you your sin, and seek to comfort you with false comfort. You would not call the surgeon cruel, who probed and cut a wound in order to lay it open, and insure its healing afterwards. And you must let me, Edith, act such a part towards you. Your heart is not right before God. I do not think it has been for a long time."

"A long time," said Edith, sadly. "Ever since we tried for the prizes. It was then that I was first led to do anything really very wicked."

And in a few hurried sentences she related to Mrs. Clifton the deceitful part she had acted with regard to the history paper, adding, as she concluded,—

"And ever since then I have gone on doing wrong things, until, at last, I came to do what would have seemed to me impossible a little while ago. When first we came to school, I could not have done anything half so wicked."

Mrs. Clifton sighed.

"No," she said, "I do not think you could. It grieves me greatly to think that it should be so, but I believe that if any one had told you, a year ago, that you would fall so deeply into sin, you would have recoiled with indignation from the thought of such a thing being possible."

"Yes," said Edith, "I know I should. Oh, Mrs. Clifton, I wish, yes, I really do wish, that I were as good now as I was at home."

Mrs. Clifton did not answer, and Edith remarked the doubtful expression of her countenance.

"I was very different then from what I am now. I really was. Papa could tell you how much confidence he and mamma always placed in me. You do not believe it, Mrs. Clifton, but it is true. I know I have done very, very wrong. I know I have fallen into sin. I know I have gone out of the right path, very far out of it, but I was in it once, indeed, Mrs. Clifton, I was. Papa and mamma thought me high-principled. They trusted in me."

And Edith's voice was eager and excited.

"I know they did, Edith," said Mrs. Clifton; "why should you be so anxious to convince me of it?"

"Because," said Edith, "I cannot bear that you should think I was always deceitful. I should like you to know—"

Edith hesitated, and Mrs. Clifton said,—

"How righteous you once were. Oh, Edith, the first sign of true repentance is humility, but surely there is pride, deep-rooted pride, to be found in this wish of yours. You feel that you have fallen. Your fall makes you miserable. And why? Because it has lowered you in your own eyes, and in the eyes of others. And therefore you endeavour to regain your position in the admiration and approbation of men, by dwelling with complacency on what you once were, and striving to impress upon their minds that you were an upright walker once, and that this is but a slip. It does not give *me* any comfort, Edith, to think that you were differ-

ent once. It only adds to my grief, and makes your conduct appear in a darker and less excusable light. Far from making you seem better in my eyes, it makes you seem very much worse."

Edith looked surprised and grieved. Mrs. Clifton continued,—

"I think I can explain why. Listen, Edith. Suppose that a father were to send two children on a message of trust to some distant place, by two different roads, the one child knowing the road well, and having been instructed in all its windings and turnings from his earliest infancy,—the other having never gone that way before, and being so ignorant of its dangers and difficulties, that he was dependent for guidance upon every passer-by; which of those children, do you think, would that father expect first to reach his destination? which ought to find the way easiest to travel? which would be least likely to wander? and in case of their both going astray from the right path, and failing to fulfil the trust committed to them—which would be found most worthy of blame?"

"The one that knew the way," said Edith, "by far."

And then she added with a burst of tears, in which there was more of sorrow than of passion,—

I see it all now. Yes, I am like that well-instructed child. I knew the way. I had been taught to walk in it all my life. But I chose to go astray. Oh, dear Mrs. Clifton, it was pride and vanity that led me wrong. Will God forgive me now, and bring me back?"

"Did He ever refuse to forgive any, Edith, who truly repented of their sins, and turned to Him for the pardon which, for Christ's sake, He gives to all who seek it in sincerity and humility? Is He not a long-suffering God, full of tender mercies and loving kindness? Edith, shall we pray that He may be such to you?"

And no longer striving to excuse herself, or to take comfort from any other thought than the consciousness of her heavenly Father's willingness to pardon the repenting sinner, Edith's whole heart went up to God, while Mrs. Clifton prayed unto that most mighty God and merciful Father, who hast. compassion upon all men, and hatest nothing that He has made, who wouldest not the death of a sinner, but that he should rather turn from his sin and be saved, imploring Him mercifully to forgive her trespasses, grieved and wearied as she was with the burden of her sins, and so to turn His anger from her and make haste to help her, that she might yet live with Him in the world to come.

"Edith," said Mrs. Clifton, after a silence of some length,—“Edith, my dear child, I believe that God in His mercy has heard my prayers, and brought you to a true sense of sin, and I know that He will pardon you freely since you repent truly. But it has pleased Him to visit this sin with a very heavy punishment.”

Edith started.

"Alice!" she exclaimed. "I thought she was well. Oh, Mrs. Clifton, is Alice—"

"Alice is out of all danger," said Mrs. Clifton, "but Minnie, Edith,—you remember that Minnie was ill too."

"But the fever was gone days ago," said Edith, "she was recovering."

"She had no strength of constitution," said Mrs. Clifton. "She could not rally from the effects of the fever. She was always a weak, delicate child, and now—"

"She is dying," interrupted Edith.

"She is dead," said Mrs. Clifton.

"I have killed her!" exclaimed Edith. And with "an exceeding loud and bitter cry," a cry which reached Alice's ears, she fell upon the ground.

Mrs. Clifton raised her gently.

"No," she said, "you have *not* killed her, God alone can give or take away life. In His hand are the issues of life and death. It has been His will to raise up Alice. It has equally been His will to take Minnie from us. Edith, we must submit to His will."

"Yes, yes," exclaimed Edith, "oh, yes, I must submit, I deserve it all. I deserved worse."

"Alice might have been taken also," said Mrs. Clifton, "but in judgment God has remembered mercy."

"Yes," said Edith. "God is just and good. But I have been very, very wicked, and oh, it is a heavy punishment."

And as she threw herself upon the bed, and gave way to the full agony of her feelings, it seemed as though the punishment were too heavy to be borne.

## CHAPTER XXII.

"Then draw we nearer day by day,  
Each to his brethren, all to God.  
Let the world take us as she may,  
We must not change our road;  
Not wondering, though in grief, to find  
The martyr's foe still keep her mind,  
But fix'd to hold love's banner fast,  
And by submission win at last."

CHRISTIAN YEAR.

A FORTNIGHT afterwards, Edith and Alice were sitting together in the drawing-room of Mrs. Clifton's house; their work lay upon a table beside them, but the conversation in which they were engaged appeared to be of too interesting a character for them to attend to anything besides, for they had both laid aside their needles, and were talking in low, but very earnest tones.

"I shall never be the same again," said Edith, "my very nature seems changed."

"I don't think," replied Alice, "that anything will ever be just the same again, sometimes I fancy Mrs. Clifton will not remain much longer in London."

"What makes my little Alice fancy that?" said a voice behind her, and Mrs. Clifton herself leant over Alice's chair and kissed her forehead.

"I think you said so to Miss Clifton when I was in the room," said Alice, "but I hope, wherever you go, we shall go too."

"Yes," said Edith, "we could not do without you."

"Nor, I hope, will you be called upon to do so. I think there is no likelihood of our leaving London just now, Alice; some future day perhaps, if my life is spared, I shall give up this house, for my sister's health obliges her to fix her home in the country instead of coming, as I had at first wished, to live with us, and I should like to go and share a home with her in some quieter spot than can be found in London. But it will not be yet, Alice, most probably not till your father returns. And wherever I go, if he has not returned, I must claim to take you with me. You are my children, you know, both of you.

"I am not come to disturb you," she added, "I only came to fetch a book, when Alice's words attracted my attention, and now I shall leave you to yourselves again, only remember you are under promise to remember all that we have this day to thank God for."

And she turned to kiss Edith, whose eyes were overflowing with tears.

"Mrs. Clifton never disturbs us," said Alice, "she always seems to understand one's feelings, and enter into them. I can talk just as easily before her as when she is away, can't you?"

"No," said Edith, "not quite, although I do love her very much, and I think it will be easier now. Only I shall



never feel as you do, Alice. I shall always feel that I have injured her so much, that I have brought such a great grief upon her."

"She will not think so," said Alice.

"No," replied Edith. "But I shall always fancy that she does."

"I don't think it is such a very great grief to Mrs. Clifton," said Alice, thoughtfully.

"O Alice!" exclaimed Edith; "she loved Minnie so much."

"Yes, I know she did," replied Alice, "and for that very reason I believe she is thankful that God has taken her. She loved Minnie so much that it grieved her dreadfully to see her always so unhappy, and not to be able to comfort her, and I am sure she is happy in knowing her in heaven, where she can never be sad again. She was so very sad always, much as I loved her, even I cannot regret her death as I should do if she had been happier in this life."

"I know she is happy," said Edith, "but to have caused her death. It is that that is so dreadful; I know I shall never get over it."

Alice could not comfort her sister with the hope that she would, for she felt how impossible such a thing must be.

"There is much comfort," she said: "Mrs. Clifton, I know, feels thankful that it was Minnie, not only because hers was a less happy life than any of the others, but because she was so well prepared to die."

"Yes," said Edith, "I know Mrs. Clifton feels this.

She said to me on Sunday when we were talking, 'Oh, if it had been any of the more thoughtless, how could I have borne it then?' And I felt, Alice, how dreadful it would have been. If one of the Carters had died, I should have been miserable indeed, or any one who had not cared about religion."

"Marion Carter does care for religion," said Alice; "you don't know, Edith, how much she thinks about good things, and I believe that Minnie's death will help greatly to make her more serious still. I hope we shall all be the better for such a great sorrow, and that, when school begins again, we shall all be striving together. I feel as if I should be much more in earnest now than I had ever been before, I hope the feeling won't pass away."

"I think you have always been in earnest," said Edith. "I believe, Alice, you have gone on trying to do right ever since papa went away."

"Trying, perhaps," said Alice, "but very often not succeeding. One thing especially, I know, was *very* wrong, and when I was trying to find out what I had done wrong, and why it was that this great sorrow had come,—for you know, Edith, the Bible says that God does not willingly afflict any one,—I saw so plainly how sinful I had been. Indeed, Edith, you always take all the blame on yourself, but I feel that a great part of it belongs to me. When first Mrs. Graham came back to England, I knew as well as you did that we ought not to be so intimate with her. I ought to have said so to Mrs. Clifton."

"It was I to speak," said Edith, "I was the eldest, the fault was mine."

"And mine too," said Alice, "you don't know how much I feel it. Silence gives consent, you know, Edith, and, by not speaking, I went with you in what you did. It came from weakness, that dreadful weakness which is such a temptation to me. I was afraid, Edith, afraid of two things,—of vexing you, and of making it appear as though I set myself up to be better than others."

"It was very natural," said Edith.

"But it was very wrong," replied Alice; "weakness of character has been my great snare. Oh, Edith, I have felt the misery of yielding to it, I trust I shall never forget it."

"And I," said Edith, "I have felt the misery of trusting to myself. How strange it is to see how each has their own besetting sins and weaknesses!"

"Mamma often warned us of ours, we ought to have been more on our guard," said Alice.

"We learn from our own experience," replied Edith, "there is nothing like seeing the misery which any particular sin brings with it to make us hate that sin, and dread it for the future; pride, for instance, I never could have thought what misery it would have worked. And it all came so gradually. It began by such little things. I was led away little by little, until at length, Alice, I believe my whole character was altering without my knowing it, and if God had not sent this dreadful trouble to stop me, I don't know what I might have become: we don't know ourselves

the changes that sin is working in us, they come on us so gradually."

"Yes," said Alice, "I remember Mrs. Clifton's saying to me one day that we are always changing either for the better or for the worse, and that we can no more check the growth of our minds, than we could the growth of our bodies, or of the flowers of the fields, and that the change, although so great, was quite unconscious to ourselves."

"As unconscious as the change in our features," said Edith; "you know, Alice, we could not understand Mrs. Stanley's finding us so much altered since she had seen us last, it did not seem to us that there had been any change, merely because it had come upon us so gradually as not to be perceived."

There was a silence of some moments, and then Alice said,—

"How carefully we ought to watch even the slightest approach of temptation, since we know how stealthily it comes upon us, and how naturally we are disposed to listen to its voice, and be led away by it!"

"Yes," said Edith, very gravely, "Mrs. Clifton said the other day that the tendency to sin which is in every one's heart has been called by some one, the 'gravitation of a fallen being,' and that just as it is true that there is a physical law of gravitation which compels all things in themselves to fall to the earth, so is there in every fallen man a law of moral gravitation, which leads him to fall into sin."

"I am sure that is true," replied Alice, "I feel it to be

so. The natural inclination of my heart is always to do wrong, and I never yield to its first impulse without having to regret afterwards that I have done so. I am sure, if we wish to get on in the right way, we must be always watching, always striving, always fighting. Edith dear, let us begin as it were quite anew, and strive to help each other. Oh, I am so thankful that there is some time yet before the confirmation."

"Two months," said Edith. "I dreaded the time a month ago. But now I long for it. For now I do feel that I can go truthfully to ask God to strengthen me, and give me His own Spirit of counsel and strength, and knowledge, and true godliness. O Alice, if I had only had that spirit in me before, and that holy fear, how different it might have been!"

"We will not think of the past, Edith darling," said Alice, "we will think of the present and the future. We will help each other every day, and I hope, when we go to be confirmed, it will be with a true desire to fulfil those solemn vows."

And so indeed it was. Two months later the confirmation was held in the church of St. Mary-le-bone, and many who were there remarked the peculiar earnestness of devotion of two young sisters, who knelt side by side before the Lord's table, while a hand was laid on each, and the prayer offered that each might be so defended with God's heavenly grace, that she might continue His for ever, and daily increase in His Holy Spirit more and more, until she should come unto His everlasting kingdom.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

"This dwelling charms me—often I stop short  
(Who could refrain?) and feed by stealth my sight  
With prospect of the company within \*        \*

\*        \*        \*        \*        \*  
Thrice happy, then, the mother may be deemed,  
The wife, from whose consolatory grave  
I turned, that ye in mind might witness where,  
And how, her spirit yet survives on earth!"

WORDSWORTH.

Two years had passed since last we met Edith and Alice Cornwall—two years, the chief part of which had been spent so quietly and steadily that there would be but little in their history to fill our pages.

But the last three months had been full of interest to those in whose daily life we have been interested, and had worked great changes in the circumstances of most amongst them.

Colonel Cornwall had returned from abroad, and perhaps his return had helped to bring about some of these. For Mrs. Clifton, whose health had long been delicate, and who thought she saw a path of duty opening for her elsewhere, gave up her home in London, and went to live in

Oxfordshire, to be with her widowed sister and her daughters, and assist them in the charge of their pupils.

Dora Milford had left school before, and the last that had been heard of her was that she was living in great style and gaiety, and was on very intimate terms with Lady Georgina Ashton's family. The Carters too had left London, and returned home to assist their mother in the education of a large number of little brothers and sisters, for whose benefit it was, as well as for their own, that they had been sent to so good a school. Anna Maitland and her little sister were the last of the "dear old set," as Alice called them, who remained with Edith and Alice at Mrs. Clifton's, and as they had never been so intimate with them as with their other young companions, school had lost a great deal of its interest in their hearts before their father returned, and they left London to be again under his care.

The parting with Mrs. Clifton had been very painful, especially to Alice, but it was cheered by the prospect of constant meetings—for their father had promised them that, in seeking for a spot in which to fix his home, now that he had retired from the army, his health no longer enabling him to remain in a foreign climate,—he would not settle in any place which would be beyond an easy distance from the friend who had been to them as a mother. So that when he left England to travel on the continent with his daughters, Mrs. Clifton had undertaken to look for a house in her neighbourhood, which would be a suitable home for them, and it was on hearing that a very pretty place, ten miles distant,

was to be sold, that Colonel Cornwall hastened his return to England in order to see it.

It was in every way so exactly what he wanted, that he at once bought it, and in this home we again find Edith and Alice after our two years' absence from them.

They were sitting together in what they called their own sitting-room,—a long, low, but very pleasant room at the back of the house, which opened by a large window upon the lawn, then green with summer's brightest hues, and adorned with many well and gaily-filled flower-beds.

The lawn was enclosed by high thick shrubs, so that the view from this window did not include anything beyond the bright flower-beds, although from the upper windows, and in front of the house, it extended over a wide field of beauty, where the eye could wander at will among the high hills in the distance, or rest upon the nearer prospect of thickly-wooded little glens, and bright, rippling streams tracing their clear course amongst them.

It was altogether a sweet spot, such a spot as one often sees in England, but never sees anywhere else, a complete scene of happy, romantic, English beauty. The house itself was large, although, from its irregular appearance,—additional rooms having been added at different times to the original building,—it did not seem so large as it really was, being low in front, and running out to some distance at the back.

All the best rooms were in front of the house, the dining-room, with its three bow-windows, opening also upon a green



lawn, which rose in high banks of velvet turf, on each side of a silver stream which wound its sparkling way between them, and was lost in the plantation beyond, through which it coursed its quiet way to the more distant river. The drawing-room was above the dining-room, at least it seemed so in front, but the house being built on the slope of a somewhat steep hill, the front windows looked over those of the room below upon a more extended view, while a deep side-window opened to the ground upon a lovely bank, where grew the rarest flowers, now tended by the two sisters' careful hands.

But pleasant as was the dining-room with its oak-panelled walls and handsome old furniture, and elegant as was the drawing-room, which their father had delighted in furnishing with all which he thought would best suit the taste and convenience of his daughters, there was for them a special charm about the little morning-room, which they considered their own peculiar property, and where they kept their special treasures.

It was in this room that they were now sitting, Alice busy with her work, and Edith reading aloud to her. But little change seemed to have passed over Alice during the last two years,—but little change indeed since we first knew her. She had grown taller certainly, but was as slight and childlike in figure as ever,—her rich auburn hair fell in just the same wavy masses, on each side of her delicately-shaped throat, and looked as though it longed to break from the restraint which bound it by a simple bow of brown ribbon at

the back of her head, and fall over her shoulders in the natural curl which belonged to it. Her eyes were as blue as ever, and had lost nothing of their peculiar gladness, although perhaps there was a deeper, more thoughtful look about them than in the days of childhood. While her lips still parted into the same bright smile of contented happiness which had always been her special charm, and every tone of her voice was of soft melody.

If Marion Carter had seen her now, she would indeed have said that it was not often one saw such a face. It was the same face as ever, richer in its more matured beauty, but still the same in feature and expression.

All the change seemed to be in Edith. She had said that she would never be the same again. And she never was.

But no one who had known her then, and who saw her now, could have regretted the change, or said that it was otherwise than a most happy one. For the pride of her former bearing was gone, and when she spoke, the voice which had once been haughty, almost dictatorial, was quiet and humble.

She was not exactly handsome, at least not what would be generally considered so, for her features were not good, her forehead was too large and prominent for beauty, and her complexion was too pale. Yet there was something very striking in her appearance: her figure was tall, and had a look of natural dignity and command about it; her dark eyes would have been almost piercing in their look of clear, questioning

intelligence, if it had not been for an expression of sadness; and the large, well-shaped mouth seemed as though it was only framed for words of wisdom.

Edith was not a girl who, once seen, could easily be forgotten. Her manner was decided, but it was a sort of restrained decision, as though she felt more strongly than she would allow herself to show.

She read beautifully, and with such feeling that, when she laid down the book—a volume of Schiller's poems,—Alice exclaimed,—

"It is just like seeing it all. You read so beautifully, Edith."

"Or rather Schiller describes so beautifully," replied Edith, smiling.

"Both," said Alice, "I could not bear to hear a beautiful description massacred by bad reading. But how long we must have been here,—what o'clock is it now?"

Edith looked at her watch, and said it was twelve o'clock nearly, and Alice proposed that, as there was still more than an hour before luncheon, Edith should read something else, as she was obliged to go on with her work—a frock for one of the village children, in which she was to appear at school on the following day—"that is to say," she added, "if you are not tired."

"Oh, I am not tired," Edith replied, "I could go on reading for hours. But I must not read any more now, or my drawing for Marion will never be finished."

"Oh yes!" Alice exclaimed, "I had quite forgotten the

drawing. And we wanted to send it for her birth-day. There is only a week more,—do you think it will be done?"

"Yes," said Edith. "It is very nearly finished now. I worked at it for a long time yesterday when you were out with papa. I think you will find it greatly improved."

And opening a portfolio she drew out a copy of the water-colour drawing of the old home in St. John's Wood, which had been Mrs. Clifton's parting present to Alice.

"It looks well, does it not?" she asked.

"Yes, very," said Alice, "I am very glad Marion is going to have a picture of the old house. She was so fond of it."

"Especially after you and she became such friends," said Edith. "I think, Alice, Marion was quite different during the last half-year she was at school."

"There was always so much good in her," said Alice. "I liked her the very first day. Even before I heard her speak, I took a fancy to her from the way in which she laughed at something one of the others said; she had such an honest, merry laugh, do you remember?"

"No," said Edith, "I can't say I remember anything about them, except that I thought them both very silly."

"Not Marion," said Alice, "I don't think she was ever exactly silly. She was clever, only giddy."

"Well, giddy," said Edith, "she always seemed to be laughing over some nonsense or other. But I dare say—"

Edith was already reproaching herself for speaking so

slightingly of Marion, and was going to say that very likely if she had taken as much trouble to cultivate her acquaintance, and draw out her better qualities, as Alice had done, she might have formed a different opinion of her.

But just at this moment their conversation was interrupted by a servant's entering the room, and enquiring whether the Colonel would be at home to luncheon.

Edith said, "No, he had desired them not to wait," and then the servant asked whether he should prepare luncheon in the dining-room, or if he should bring it to them there

Three years ago Edith would have returned a quick, decisive answer, without consulting any one's wishes or inclinations but her own; but now, turning to Alice, she asked,—

"Which would you like best, Alice,—here, or in the dining-room?"

Alice replied, "Here, unless it disarranges your drawing things. It is so cosy here, all by ourselves."

"Here, then, if you please, Wilson," Edith said, and she moved her portfolio and paint-box to another table.

Alice rose to draw up the venetian blind which shaded the window.

And as she did so, she exclaimed, "Oh, look at the lawn, Edith, how beautiful the flowers are after the rain."

And Edith coming to the window, the sisters stood together admiring the beauty of the scene before them.

"What a sweet home it is!" said Alice warmly. "I long for the Carters to come and see it. I should like to

have all my friends here at once to enjoy it with me. It is such a lovely, lovely spot."

"Yes," said Edith, "lovely."

But something in Alice's words seemed to jar upon her feelings, for she turned from the window with a pained expression of face which Alice well knew, and, returning to the table, busied herself with her drawing.

Alice saw that something was the matter, and she came to her sister's side, and putting her arm round her neck, kissed her forehead, and said, "You were thinking of mamma, Edith."

"No," said Edith, "I was not."

She hesitated a minute, and then said firmly,—

"I was thinking of Minnie, Alice. It all looked so bright and pleasant, and when you said that about wishing all you loved to be staying here with you, it made me think of poor little Minnie, and what a happy home this would have been for her, and how happy it would have made you to have her here. It would have been a resting-place for her on earth, a pleasant resting-place for her weary little feet. But for me it might have been so."

The last words were pronounced in so low a voice that they were scarcely audible. But Alice heard them, and even if she had not done so, she would have guessed what they were, for she knew that it was the one deep wound in Edith's heart, and that when, as would sometimes happen, anything touched it, the pain was almost greater than she could bear.

"It is a sweet resting-place," Alice said, gently; "it is most pleasant to our feet, Edith. But Minnie needs no such rest. Her feet are not weary now. Is she not better in heaven than she could be with us? Come, Edith darling, you must not make me unhappy, indeed you must not. And papa will be here directly, and perhaps will be wanting us to go out with him. Let us go to luncheon."

And Alice took away her sister's drawing, and pressed her to come to the table.

But Edith still looked grave. That thought, once aroused, had such power to torment, that it came upon her almost like a temptation, forcing her, as it were, to dwell upon it, although it brought such bitter, remorseful pain.

"Let me go away for a little, Alice dear," she said; "I will come back soon, and there will be time for luncheon then. You know how I feel, or rather you don't know, for you need never have such dreadful thoughts, but I can get over them better by myself. Oh, Alice, if Minnie had not been what she was—if we did not know that she was in heaven,—I don't think I could bear it."

"But she *is* in heaven, Edith," Alice replied. "She is happy, happier than we ever could have made her."

Alice knew that this was the only thought that could bring any comfort to Edith in these moments of self-reproach. And Edith went into the garden with Alice's words sounding like an angel's whispers in her heart, and when she returned to the house she was again quiet and self-composed.

Luncheon was scarcely ended when the sound of a horse's feet was heard on the gravel, and a few moments after the door opened, and Colonel Cornwall entered the room. His figure was slightly bent since last we saw him on the morning of his departure for Portsmouth. His hair, which had then been quite black, was now well strewn with gray, and his brow was marked with many a deep line which had not then been found upon it. But the look of anxiety and sorrow which had then rested on his face had given place to an expression of the most thankful satisfaction, and no one who had seen the bright look which came over his countenance as he met his daughters, or heard the cheerful voice with which he returned their greeting, would have needed to inquire whether Colonel Cornwall were a happy man.

He had known much and great sorrow, and it had left behind it, as it always will, marks and signs which would never be effaced. For many years the pathway of his life had lain in deep shadow, but through the gloom could always be seen, in the distance, indications of the brightness which the hopes fixed upon his children afforded; gradually and patiently he had drawn nearer and nearer to this brightness, and now that he had gained the sunny spot, and was once more allowed to feel the cheering warmth of earthly joy and affection, his happiness was such that no words ever seemed to him expressive enough in which to thank the great Author and Giver of all good things, who had preserved his children in safety, and made them, through the mighty workings of His grace and providence, all that he could desire to see them.



"You did not expect me so early, did you?" he asked, as the girls rose to welcome him.

"No, not for another hour, or more," Alice replied.

"Mr. Shafton was not at home, so I could not settle my business with him, and I rode back as soon as I had seen Parkins. I waited for the letters, however. There are some for you girls, which you would not otherwise have had till to-morrow, so I hope you are properly grateful. Alice will be, I am sure, for there is one from Mrs. Clifton. And the other, I think, is from her friend Marion."

And he took a parcel of letters from his pocket, and handed two of them to Alice.

"As for you, Edith," he said, giving one to her, "I really don't know who your correspondent is. She writes a capital hand, but I don't think I ever saw it before."

"Dora Milford!" Edith exclaimed, as she broke the seal. "I wonder what makes her write to me. I have not heard from her since she wrote to say she was going to stay with Lady Georgina, and then I believe she only wrote because she wished us to be informed of the fact."

"Charity, Edith," said Colonel Cornewall, with a smile.

But for once his word of half-reproof was lost upon Edith. For, from the moment she opened the letter, she became so completely engrossed in its contents, that she did not look up until she had read it through, when she exclaimed,—

"Dora Milford is engaged to be married to Lady Georgina's brother!"

"Indeed," said Colonel Cornewall. "Your old school-companion, Edith; I am very sorry for it."

And he seemed greatly interested and quite as much distressed.

"So young too," said Alice; "she is only nineteen."

"Poor girl," said her father, "has she known him long? is she aware of the character he bears, do you think?"

"I don't know," Edith answered. "She was staying at Silverbanks last year, but I don't know whether Lord Ashton was at home. Do you know much about him, papa?"

"I knew him years ago, before I went abroad," her father answered. "He was very young then, but very wild, and his mother had not the smallest influence with him."

"But perhaps he is improved, papa," said Alice.

"I am afraid not, Alice, I fear just the contrary, from what I heard of him in town only the other day. Poor girl," he said again, "she is very much to be pitied."

"She does not seem to think so," said Edith, "her letter is written in high spirits; would you like to see it, papa?"

Colonel Cornewall read the letter, and returned it, saying,—

"High spirits, indeed, but I fear not to last long. She speaks of bright prospects. I can't see where they lie."

"She will be rich," said Edith, "and Silverbanks is a lovely place. And she will move in a higher circle, and hold a higher position, than she could ever have expected to do. I suppose that is what she means by bright prospects."

"And for such things as these," said Colonel Cornewall, and his voice was almost stern as he spoke,—“for money, and

rank, and position, and a little of this world's glare and show, there are found parents willing to sacrifice their own children. For Dora Milford has parents, has she not?"

"Oh yes, papa, she is their only child too. I believe they are very worldly people. You see she says they are delighted at the engagement."

"Yes, I remember she does. It seems wonderful."

He looked upon his daughters with a look of tender, fatherly anxiety, which seemed to say, "thank God, it is neither of you."

Alice, who had laid down her own letters to listen to the more interesting contents of Edith's, remarked the expression of her father's countenance, and the thought passed across her mind, what would it have been if it had been Edith instead of Dora? It might have been, for Dora had succeeded Edith in the place she held as Lady Georgina's friend.

It had been Edith whom Lady Georgina had first wished to invite to Silverbanks, to share in the daily pursuits and occupations of herself and her only brother.

The same invitation had afterwards fallen to Dora's lot, and who, that felt all that might result from it, would now be disposed to envy her?

Colonel Cornewall was the first to turn the conversation into another channel. He asked Alice if there were any news in her letters.

"There is Mrs Clifton's, papa," she said. "It is only a note to say she hopes to be here next week."

"And Marion, what does she say?" asked Edith.

"You may read it," Alice said.

"And may I too?" asked her father, as Edith laid the letter upon the table. "You know I am very partial to your merry little friend."

Alice blushed, and hesitated, and her father immediately added, "Oh don't scruple about saying No, if there are any secrets in the letter, Alice. Secrets are sacred things, and I dare say Marion tells you many things which she would not like you to repeat to me. You may tell me as many of your own secrets as you choose, but I would not wish you to tell me any of your friend's."

"There are none in that letter, papa," said Edith, laughing, "but the fact is, Alice is modest about your reading it, because Marion says so many pretty things about her in it. Let papa see it, Alice."

"Yes," said Colonel Cornewall, "let me see it, if that is your only reason for hesitating. It won't make any difference in my opinion of you, you know, Alice, to see what Marion thinks about you. Her being blind to your faults won't prevent my seeing them. But if you are modest about it, you may run over to Darby's cottage, and tell him I want to speak to him directly, for I have a message for him which I had very nearly forgotten, chatting here with you."

Alice went for her hat, and in another minute was running across the lawn to the lodge, while her father gave the letter to Edith to read aloud to him.

"My own darling Alice," it began, and any one who had known Marion Carter at school, might easily have recog-

nized it as her production, without needing to look at the signature.

After giving an animated description of their home, and some of their own and their neighbours' doings, she ended by saying,—

“And now I must tell you how good I am. Don't think me conceited for saying I am good. Because I don't mean that I'm like you—good at heart, you know—and sweet, and gentle, and all that—because I am not, and I am afraid never shall be, or, at all events, not for a very long time. You see, Alice dear, it's the old story of ‘there was a garden full of weeds,’ that we used to learn in the nursery. Of course the more weeds there are, the longer time it must take to get them up. It does not require much of the logic Edith was so fond of to prove that. And as I am a garden of the very weediest description, I am afraid, for some time to come, there will be plenty of work to do, and that altogether it won't be a very profitable affair. But there must be a beginning to all things. And I really believe I have begun, and, what is more, am getting along pretty steadily, especially in the teaching line. I work away with the children every morning from nine to twelve, and actually I make it out so well that we all of us now rather enjoy the time than otherwise. And as for patience, I begin to think it's with that as with other things, ‘practice makes perfect.’ For, as I told you, it used to be all I could do not to box Annie's ears when she would always say and do everything wrong, and this morning I actually did the same sum

over with her *twelve* times, and was not a bit cross ; now is not that an improvement ? Mamma was in the room, and what do you think she told me afterwards, that I was the greatest comfort of her life, and that she did not know what she should do with the little ones if I were not such a help. I tell you, Alice dear, because I know it will please you, and because, too, I know that if it had not been for you, those words would never have been spoken of me. For mamma used always to be telling me that I was the greatest plague of them all. And I believe I was, until I learned from you that we are not sent into life just to please ourselves ; and I am so much obliged to you for helping me to find out what *my* work in life is, and putting me in the way of doing it. Thank you so much for sending me that sweet little book, with a text for every hour. I try to remember each text whenever the hour strikes, and I am sure it does me good. Julia and I both teach in the village school now, and we have begun going to the cottages. Mamma does not mind our going since I showed her your letter. She said your influence over me had been so good, she did not wish to object to anything you might recommend. I must not begin a fourth sheet, so good bye. God bless you, my darling Alice. I always ask Him to do so every night and morning of my life. With much love to Edith, I am your very loving Marion."

"She is so fond of Alice," said Edith, as she folded the letter, "and I am sure she has reason to be. Alice had such influence over her for good."

"So it appears indeed," said her father; "I hope her letters and praises do not make our Alice vain."

"Oh no, papa," Edith replied. "Alice does not even attach any importance to them, they are well deserved, every one of them, but Alice only thinks that Marion speaks so warmly because she is fond of her, and love makes her partial. Alice is perfectly humble."

"Yes," said her father, "it is her greatest charm. It was her mother's. She is just like her."

"She is exactly like her picture," said Edith.

She knew that it was a favourite subject with her father, and one which he always seemed glad to hear mentioned.

"When we were at school, the girls used to say they never saw anything so like as Alice was to our miniature likenesses of dear mamma. I wonder sometimes what they would say if they could see her as she is now, and compare her with the picture in this room? Alice is a little young for it now, but I think in five years' time there will not be any difference."

"I think so too," replied her father; "and the likeness is quite as strong in mind as in feature. There is doubtless a great connection between mind and person. You know, Edith, I have great belief in physiognomy; you almost always see a certain stamp of mind with a certain character of face."

"I know you do," said Edith.

"They tell me I am like you, papa," she added, coming

near, and seating herself on a stool at his feet ; " I hope the reasoning may apply in my case also."

" You are like Marion," her father replied, smiling, and laying his hand fondly on her head. " You know how to flatter, but I believe, Edith, that we are like in mind as well as in person. I have always thought so, and now I see it very clearly."

" I wish I did," said Edith ; " I don't wish to flatter, papa, but it would encourage me very much to think that I might one day grow to be like you."

" Not like me, Edith," he said, " God grant that you may grow to be very much better. There is no reason why you should not, but I know it is often up-hill work. People of what is called character, that is to say, people with strong opinions and decided wills, may have much to help them in their onward course. Doubtless they have. For strength of purpose and the power to persevere are great helps. But they have equally strong faults to act as clogs upon them, and drag them back, when they would fain press onward. And, amongst these, I think the greatest are a difficulty of bending their own will, or yielding to the opinion or advice of others, which lead into what is commonly called self-conceit. But here is Alice, she does not look as if she had much weight to bear her down, either physically or mentally," he added, as Alice ran across the lawn, and came in through the open window, the fresh colour in her cheeks heightened by exercise, looking, her father and sister thought, most bright and lovely.



"Darby will be here in a minute. I told him to come to this window, and then, papa, will you have any more business to-day?" she asked.

"Which means, I suppose, that you will supply me with some if I have not; well, what do you want?" he replied.

"To ride over to Shepton, papa, if it is convenient, to see Lucy Grenfell. I had a note from her this morning, saying she will be very glad to enter into any plans which Edith and I may think likely to be of use to the poor people, but she can't quite understand about our clothing society from my letter."

"Why did not Edith write the letter?" her father said, smiling; "she would have understood it then."

"I dare say she would," Alice answered, "but Edith and I would like very much to ride over and settle it all, if you can come with us. It will be a lovely evening, and it is a very pleasant ride to Shepton."

"And I shall be delighted to go," said her father, "especially as I heard a piece of news in Crofton this morning, which I had till now quite forgotten to tell you, but which I shall be very glad to congratulate Mrs. Shepton about. Her son has come out first on the list in his examination."

"Oh how delighted they will be," exclaimed Alice; "that poor old lady, I am so glad on her account. She is such an invalid, and seems so fond of her son. And Lucy will be so happy, for she thinks there is no one like her brother."

"With great reason, I fancy," said the Colonel, "he has been an excellent son to his widowed mother, and I hear is

doing great things at college, and is very highly thought of everywhere."

"Lucy says he is not the least conceited," said Edith, "although he is so clever. She says he is always ready to do anything for anybody."

"Well, here comes Darby," said the Colonel, "so you can order the horses, and prepare for your ride."

The girls left the room together. Their father followed them with an earnest look of mingled love and thankfulness, and then he fixed his eyes upon the picture of their mother, that sainted mother whose glorified spirit, though unseen, was yet to every member of that little family a felt and living presence.

Surely, though she might be what men call dead, her voice was still heard to speak; or were those but echoes which fell so often upon the loving ears of that listening household?

THE END.



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